

RACIALISM AND WORLD FAITH



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A Study of the Epistle
to the Galatians

by

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Devinity

FOREWORD

Some few weeks after the outbreak of war a distinguished scholar discoursed in private upon the outlook for the Christian Faith. Any man's understanding of the outlook *for* the Faith is governed, however, by his outlook *upon* it, and here the observations of the speaker were not without significance. It was now recognized, he said, that the Christian Gospels, though they contained valuable historical material, were of a character that could better be described as "edifying propaganda" than as biography: and of course, in any case, in our examination of Christian sources, we had need to pass behind the Gospels to the Epistles which ante-dated them. But even here the material was not unmixed; the Epistles showed signs of later editing, and much that they contained was of doubtful authorship. The Epistle to the Galatians, however, was an exception. For, if only by reason of the retention of "a certain violent expression" (v. 12) in the body of the text, the document might fairly be regarded as a faithful transcript of the Apostolic original. It was therefore specially important to study this Epistle for the sources of the primitive Faith.

What then did *Galatians* disclose to us? He thought that it left upon the mind of the unprejudiced modern reader the impression that Christianity began as a popular movement behind which, by Apostolic times, the historical Jesus was already a very shadowy figure. On the other hand the distinctively Christian virtues were by no means shadowy; and these were Love, Joy and Peace; Love in the sense of a determination to think well of everybody and do well to everybody; Joy in the sense of a faith-inspired disposition to face life cheerfully; and Peace in the sense of a determination to keep out of quarrels and wars. Here then in these

simple virtues we had the *ethos* of that primitive popular movement.

Now to cite for purposes of personal criticism the *obiter dicta* of a distinguished scholar in private discourse, and to cite them loosely from imperfect and unverified recollection, would be grossly unjust. The pertinence of this reminiscence—it might as well be treated as imaginary—is that it summarizes a body of belief, or rather what we now like to term an “approach,” which is very far from being peculiar to any one Christian scholar or group of scholars—which is indeed being incorporated in the general presuppositions of multitudes of educated Protestants regarding the essentials of their faith.

Yet it is conceivable, even so, that there are unprejudiced and not wholly uneducated minds which, invited to contemplate some such “approach” or “simplification,” presently find themselves embarrassed by a simplicity which becomes altogether too problematical and complicated. It is possible, for instance, that they find themselves driven to inquire: Would such a “simplification,” introduced so to say at zero in its original, primitive setting, ever have produced the “popular movement” which became Christianity? Would it have sustained it? Would it suffice to revive such a movement now? Would it even have left to us such a document as the Epistle to the Galatians itself? Indeed, does any such “simplification” bring us within sight of the Gospel according to *Galatians* as that Epistle presents itself to the unsophisticated reader?

It is not extravagant to suppose that the most satisfactory way to deal with such questions is to take them to the Epistle itself; and this sufficiently defines the purpose of the present study. That such a study, limited in its scope and by no means a work of erudition, should leave some critical problems unexplored, and even unmentioned, may perhaps be understood. But in an age which shows symptoms of

returning to some recognition of the existence, and even importance, of theology, and which is indeed, here and there, becoming acutely theology-conscious, a word must be said about theological implications.

It may be that an overworked reviewer, or a casual reader glancing over the pages of this little book, will suspect it of being a thinly disguised essay in Barthianism: for does not the exposition begin (ominously) with a quotation from Barth, and are not certain Barthian (or Kierkegaardian) expressions sprinkled conspicuously through the text? Now it so happens that the author has no right to subscribe himself a Barthian. He regards Karl Barth as a gift of God to the Churches, and he believes that Barth has opened, or reopened, a road over which many in their Christian thinking must thankfully travel: certainly the author has thankfully followed it and found himself in good company. But that the road *is* a road and not a terminus, who would be disposed to deny? There must surely, even for the most convinced Barthian—and *because* he is so convinced—be something beyond the Barthian line of things, and he will keep that “beyond” in his eye, setting his face toward that spiritual country to which many roads must lead but which none, nor all of them together, may contain.

Indeed there is a danger lest the Barthian emphasis upon the Otherness of God in His absolute power and glory should demoralize (as in Kierkegaard’s “Fear and Trembling”) the Christian conception of worship and obedience, making it a surrender to absolute Authority, conceived, it is true, in terms of eternal Goodness, but in terms of a Goodness so transcendent as to be unknowable and therefore blindly obeyed. This means, as Kierkegaard rightly perceived, a suspension of ethics, and may mean more. Yet the Christian worship of God is not, one must believe, an altogether blind prostration before the Unsearchable and Unknowable, but a surrender to Goodness recognized *as* Goodness. To

say this is not to say that fallen man is himself inherently capable of goodness, but it is to say that when Goodness is presented to him he is capable of knowing it; and that it is so presented to him for his recognition belongs to the teaching of the Christian Faith. To deny that this God-given capacity exists in men is to deny to man a moral nature altogether, and therefore even the possibility of sin. Nevertheless—and here the Barthian idiom is surely the language of the Christian heart everywhere—both manifestation *and* recognition, initiative *and* response, are “of God.”

And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.

This also is the Paradox of faith!

March 10, 1942.

G. O. G.



Quotations from Chrysostom are from his “Commentary” (“Library of the Fathers,” Oxford 1845 edn.); those from Luther are from the English 1575 edn. of his “Galatians.” The quotations from J. B. Lightfoot’s Commentary: “Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians” are from the fifth edn. 1875.

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Chapter One

SALUTATION

I. 1-5

Paul, an apostle, not of men, as to the source of his authority, nor yet by man, as to the means by which it was conferred, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead—I, Paul, and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: grace, the source of all blessing, and peace, its bond and seal, be yours from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us from the bondage and tyranny of this present—passing—age with all its evils, according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be the glory through the ages eternal! Amen.

Paul, an apostle. "The man who is now speaking is an emissary, bound to perform his duty" (Barth). He has been called, set apart, commissioned, sent forth. He is indeed, as to his private and personal identity, one Saul, a native of Tarsus, a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin, a Roman citizen, educated in the Jewish Law in Jerusalem, at one time a leader in the Jewish Nationalist Party, and withal doubtless a "religious genius." But here all such particulars are passed over. They have their own place and value; they will be put in as evidence later; but only in relation to the supreme claim: and here this claim is put forward as the only one needing mention. The man Paul appears not so much as "subject" but as "object." He is simply the one who has been seized upon and sent forth, and the authority he possesses derives from Him Who has thus seized him and sent him. Thus he is not primarily a thinker, a teacher, nor yet a mystic announcing a spiritual discovery. He has

discovered nothing; the discovery has been made *to* him, not *by* him. And his message is not even that individual experience whereby he was thus seized upon, illuminated and sent forth. Such particulars also have their legitimate place: but his apostleship and gospel centre in that which transcends all experience.

It is therefore *not of men, nor yet by man*. Neither as to its origin nor as to the means employed does his apostleship owe itself to any human agency. Emissaries "of men" there are, most certainly; and the churches of Galatia know something about such personages! Truly this is a busy world in which, for good or ill, messengers of men, with messages received through human mediation, must constantly be coming and going. Philosophy and culture, commerce and politics—these are "of men." May not religion also be of men? May it not abound in the traditions of men, in human pieties, and in a "righteousness" that is all too human also? But Paul would be understood to be an emissary in a sense far other than all this; not "of men," therefore, nor yet "by man," *but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead*. Through Jesus Christ, yet not through man. For the Jesus Christ Who has sent him forth is the Jesus Christ "raised from the dead"; the Jesus Christ therefore Who is beyond the calculus of history and of the wisdom of this world; the Christ of the Resurrection, not manifested to the world, to "all the people" (Acts x. 40, 41), but known only to faith. For verily the world knoweth Him not. It cannot receive Him, even as it cannot receive His Spirit—because "it seeth Him not" (John xiv. 17). He stands, not indeed outside history, but, as to the mystery of His Person, outside all historical verification. At most He remains, to human wisdom, a question, not an answer, a problem, not a solution. He is the Son Whom no man knoweth but the Father only (Matt. xi. 27).

So "Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead" stand together. Thus Stephen had beheld them, with eyes that looked beyond history and time; and this, indeed, was the vision which Paul himself, standing by, had not been able to behold, but by which, it may be, he was challenged and in the end convicted—haunted as it were by an accusing question, and at last brought to a stand. Even so, and however we may psychologize the setting, he stands before us in the authority of an apostleship that is of God and not of men. Thus he regards himself, and thus he desires to be regarded. This is his significance or he has no evangelical significance at all.

So that the problem which Paul poses, which he *constitutes*, is, in its own lesser magnitude, one with the problem of Jesus Christ Himself. How shall we think of Christ? Was He a religious genius simplifying a national religious tradition and distilling it through the silver philtre of His own spiritual consciousness? or was He the Elect of God, the Anointed One sent forth into the world? Was He one more teacher among teachers, one more dreamer sacrificed to His doubtful dream? or was He the Son of God? When Peter pronounces the great answer (at Cæsarea Philippi, within sight of the Grotto of Pan and his Nymphs!) he is told that flesh and blood has not revealed it to him, but the Father in heaven. That is, such an answer is not within the sphere and dimension of human wisdom. For human wisdom the question remains a question. Flesh and blood can neither answer it nor dismiss it. It *functions* as a *question*.

As it is before us here, it relates to Paul. Either his apostleship was of men, and susceptible of a merely human, historical and psychological explanation, or it was "through Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead."

This is the challenge now addressed *to the churches of Galatia*: to the congregations gathered out of a pagan

population and united together for no other reason than that they had received this same Paul as a messenger not of men but of God, and had received his message not as a word of man but as the word of God. Faith had come to them through the hearing of that Word, for with the given Word had come the given Spirit witnessing to the Word and creating the faith that received it. The given Spirit! for the "Spirit of promise" is *sent forth* even as Christ was sent forth (iv. 4, 6), and is therefore not to be confused with the religious spirit of man himself. Thus the apostle was sent forth, the Word was sent forth through him, and the Spirit was sent forth with the Word; and this, together with that faith which came through the hearing of the Word, constituted the Galatian churches as churches of God. Thus it was all of grace.

Wherefore *Grace and peace be yours from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ*. "Grace is the incomprehensible fact that God is well pleased with a man and that a man can rejoice in God" (Barth). "Peace is that [spiritual] prosperity and success in all things, which proceeds from God" (Calvin). "This grace and peace the Apostle always mentions as indispensable, and in this Epistle especially he prays that the Galatians may recover that grace from which they had wellnigh fallen, and implores God to restore them to His peace" (Chrysostom). Therefore this grace and this peace are evangelically distinctive and are not qualities common to "the religious consciousness." They are not the "grace" and "peace" of religious exaltation common to the mystics and ecstasies of all faiths. This grace and peace are from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, recognized and adored as such by faith.

Thus they proceed from the distinctive manifestation of the character and purpose of God which He made when He sent forth His Son *Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us from this present passing age with all*

its evils. The reference to the *evil* of the present age is emphatic (Lightfoot), and a contrast is implied between this present evil age, which is transient, and "the age of the ages," *the age eternal*.

"Heretics seize upon these words of Paul and pervert his testimony to an accusation of the present life. 'Lo,' say they, 'he has called this present world evil, and what does "world" [age] mean but time measured by days and seasons?' Is then the distinction of days and the course of the sun evil? It were the height of folly to assert it. . . . In calling this present world evil Paul has accommodated himself to our usage who are wont to say, 'I have had a bad day', thereby complaining not of the time itself but of actions and circumstances. And so Paul complains of evil principles of action."—*(Chrysostom.)*

"This age, this world, is under a 'god' (2 Cor. iv. 4) or 'rulers' (1 Cor. ii. 6) of its own, who are opposed to the Eternal God. . . . The Apostles speak of themselves and their generation as living on the frontier of two æons, the Gospel transferring them as it were across the border. The distinction of time between the two, which is the primary distinction, becomes lost in the moral and spiritual conception" (Lightfoot).

Jesus Christ, then, according to the will of God, gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us (emancipate us) from the bondage of this present and transitory age, with all its evil principles and powers, and lead us into the liberty and glory of the ages eternal. This, credible or incredible, is the Good News of God of which Paul is the messenger, separated unto his vocation and sent forth to the nations. This is the given Word. It is not primarily a philosophy, a mystical morality, a "new religion", but a story, a proclamation, whose author is God Himself and whose theme is the grace of God and the sin and salvation of man.

Therefore all is set forth *according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be the glory* for ever. Glory is the indefinable category, and it belongs to God alone. Herein is His eternal otherness. No one is good, no one is glorious, but God. God is His own highest end. Unerringly the arrow of the divine purpose finds the mark of the divine glory (Spurgeon). Man's chief end is to glorify God, God's to glorify Himself. Man's relative "glory" is that he can subordinate and *deny himself* for the sake of that which is higher than himself; God's absolute glory is that He cannot, for He is the Most High. It is in this sense that His thoughts are not our thoughts nor our ways His ways. He is our Father, known and yet unknown, "our *GOD* and Father, to Whom be the glory through the endless ages."

THE EVANGEL

It is notable, then, how even in this preliminary Salutation we are brought to the crucial centre of the Pauline Gospel and to the tragic interpretation of history and of man which it involves; and because this is so we may do well to tarry a while longer with these introductory sentences.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us." Here the word "rescue" ("deliver") "strikes the keynote of the epistle. The Gospel is a rescue, an emancipation, from a state of bondage" (Lightfoot). "By these words, *That He might deliver us*, Paul sheweth what is the argument of this Epistle, to wit, That we have need of grace and of Christ, and that no other creature, neither man nor angel, can deliver man out of this present evil world. For these works are only belonging to the Divine Majesty" (Luther).

Must we maintain, then, in our own world the validity of the Pauline conception which places so much emphasis upon the sinfulness of the race? Must not Christianity, "if it

is to survive," come to some restatement of its implications? Must we not move away from the Pauline-Augustinian-Lutheran conception of Man the Sinner and find room for a rather less tragical anthroposophy? Would not, indeed, a discriminating study of the Gospels themselves (as distinct from the Pauline gloss!) reward us with a more hopeful outlook? "It is noteworthy that Jesus never mentions the fall of man, nor is there any very conclusive passage in which He speaks of man as a sinner" (*Hastings Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, art. Man: Wheeler). "He gladly went among sinners and publicans, but He never said that all men were publicans and sinners" (Bousset). Does not, in short (as Bousset would suggest), the thought of Jesus come nearer than that of Paul to "our modern ideal of life"? With a little deletion, addition and adaptation could it not be harmonized even with our modern ideal of the evolving Man-god, "heroic, energetic, infinitely capable" and "acting in accordance with universal self-evolved laws of development" (Bousset)?

Or perhaps our divergence from the Pauline evangel is toward something less romantic and more materialistic—toward a conception of Man as the product of a deterministic universe in which myriad millions of Robot-humanity, stimulated by queer illusions of personal responsibility, are assembled and mechanized, scrapped and replaced, in the interest of the Marxian State. In such a world, though there may be "criminal classes" and need for periodic purges, there is manifestly no room for sin and redemption. The operation of all laws, physical, psychological, economic, political, is automatic, and, in spite of the phenomena of human will and enterprise, must mechanically and inevitably fulfil itself in the automaton of the World State. "What every government does in turn in favour of revolution becomes inviolable; what is attempted against it passes over like a cloud" (Proudhon)—or rather is made to contribute

to the revolutionary result: and Man, the creature of necessity, is drawn up into the irresistible process. This is the Calvinism of materialism.

Man the evolving god, then, or Man the godless automaton and creature of the State—are not these conceptions nearer to the modern mind than the Pauline conception of Man the sinner? Ought we not to reflect whether or no we can any longer accept as valid, or even as cogent, the gospel of an apostle whose message cuts across all our newest ideologies?

Doubtless such questions urge themselves upon us, and may continue to do so in our study of this Epistle: it will help and not hinder our study if we bear them in mind. But here our concern is with the Pauline evangel itself; and for Paul it remains true that Man is neither a young god "acting in accordance with universal self-evolved laws of development" nor a robot responding to irresistible social and economic stimuli. He is, as we have said, a sinner; that is, he is the offspring of God who yet, by reason of disobedience, has fallen short of the glory of God. "There is none righteous, no not one." Thus "our sins" (ver. 4) means not simply man's individual acts of self-will but the sinfulness of the race. For, according to Paul, the solidarity of the human race extends to this also, and not simply "extends to this," "to this also," but is *rooted* here. Since the primal Fall the oneness of mankind is grounded in evil, but therefore by implication in the imperative of good—in sin, and therefore in holiness, in death, and therefore in life. Our sinfulness stains not only our vices but our virtues; even our pieties, our idealisms, those things wherein we are "heroic, energetic, infinitely capable," are sinful. All our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags. This is the presupposition of the Gospel.

"It is profoundly true to say that the glad good news brought by the Gospel was the news of original sin"

(Chesterton). But (according to Paul) not for the Chestertonian reason! Not because, there being a bias in man's nature like the bias in the bowl, "Christianity was the discovery of how to correct the bias and therefore hit the mark". Paul was not the apostle of a merely corrective religion. That was precisely the kind of religion he had escaped from. Pharisaism had engaged to correct his bias and had put its official stamp upon him as blameless. Pharisaic Judaism was, in Paul's day, purely a religion of correction. But sin for Paul was not a defect in the bias but a rot in the wood, and the Good News was not the news of correction but of re-creation. Even so, the doctrine of Sin is fundamental to the Good News. Man indeed is not seen as an economic fraction to be finally integrated in the Socialist State, nor yet as a young Titan awaking to "idealistic dreams" of "self-preservation, self-assertion and world-domination" (Bousset); he is seen as a figure more tragic but also immeasurably nobler, even in his fall. Man is a sinner, and therefore he is responsible, and to that extent free; he is a sinner, and therefore the true meaning of his life is righteousness.

But also the implications of this doctrine of Sin point to a conception of human nature still higher and more august. Sin is not simply wrong-doing, it is wrong-doing as it challenges the eternal holiness which is the Living God; it is moreover an act and attitude of self-will which ruptures a personal relationship between man and God; therefore it witnesses to man's true life as a life of personal communion with God. It is in this sense that sin is not simply a wrong to be corrected but an offence to be forgiven. But also, since it is an offence against *God*, and therefore against eternal holiness, it is not simply an offence to be forgiven but the primal and ultimate treason which calls for atonement. It can be dealt with only by a forgiveness which involves "a final witness of holiness to holiness" (Forsyth). And here again the tragedy points to the heights, as well as the depths,

of human nature. This is the Pauline gospel. "Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins . . . according to the will of our God and Father." Puppets cannot sin; deterministic organisms integrated into the *complexus* of a soulless State need no atonement; nor do brawny Titans "acting in accordance with self-evolved laws of development" and exulting in "the will to power" and world-dominion. But this also seals their incapacity.

Paul's gospel affirms the tragedy that it may proclaim the triumph; and is there no possibility that our newer gospels miss the triumph because they deny the tragedy? Humanity may yet convince itself that it is full of "life, strength, bravery, enterprise" (Trotsky), able to "march up to the gates of Utopia" (Lenin); but Utopia remains—*Utopia*, its cloud-capp'd towers fading evermore into the unapparent.

"There is . . . a very good reason to appreciate the Marxian trust in the proletariat . . . but this trust in the poor man can be only a provisional and not an ultimate trust. A final confidence in the victory of good over evil cannot be based upon it. . . . The new social order may be immeasurably better than the old one, but it will not be free of the temptation to corrupt and misuse power.

"Perhaps, in this paradise of the poor man's dreams, the one prophet who has gained all the power will kill his fellow-prophets. . . . Only a person who allows unconscious Utopian illusions to be transmuted into conscious lies will be able to view such contemporary facts without admitting that a too unqualified trust in the poor man as the redeemer will be the very force by which the poor man becomes untrustworthy."—*Reinhold Niebuhr* ("Beyond Tragedy," pp. 129-30).

The Pauline gospel, then, is a gospel of deliverance. Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins according to the will of God that He might deliver us—"from this present age with all its evils"; not only from our sins but from our present transitory *age*, from thralldom to the *zeitgeist*, from the whole

complex of thought and enterprise that is centred in the god of this world, and not least of all from subjection to its wisdom and righteousness.—“When the world is at its best then it is worst. The white devil is far more dangerous than the black devil” (Luther).

“Christianity is uneasy when it hears men speaking loudly and with confidence about ‘creative evolution’; when it marks their plans for perfecting the development of pure and applied science, of art, of morals and of religion, of physical and spiritual health, of welfare and of well-being” (Barth). It is “uneasy”; it finds no abiding *ease*, no rest of spirit in these plans, because in general they fall short of eternity, because they are conceived in the belief in the adequacy of man and the finality of the temporal, and because they incline to deny the disturbance of the world’s equilibrium through sin. For “Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age”, from its bondage and tyranny, and bring us under the liberating power of the age to come. We have a new *Weltanschauung*, a new tradition, a new *Kultur*, not of men nor of human devising, but of God. This is the Pauline affirmation. Not indeed that this deliverance is now an accomplished actuality of “religious experience.” Our “experience” is not of deliverance but of conflict and tension. “Everything by which we are surrounded conflicts with the promise of God” (Calvin). But we live not by “experience” but by faith—by faith in Him “Who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things that be not as though they were” (Rom. iv. 17) and chooseth “the things that are not to bring to nought things that are” (1 Cor. i. 28).

The Question

Already, then, in this apostolic Salutation, we have encountered the Pauline gospel. Can we receive it? It arises out of something which though it enspheres history,

cannot be verified historically, something that is "not of men, nor by man." It is of course expressed in human words subject to critical examination; but it belongs to the magnitude of eternity; it begins (it is claimed) on the other side of time, of history and of experience. What then is to be said? Claims for messianic "gospels" have indeed been made before—and are being made to-day. History has never lacked for "messiahs" and "apostles," nor does it so lack now. What then shall we say? Here and now, at the outset of our study, no more than that we must bear our own burden of decision! Faith may not be coerced. In spite of Newman's hypothesis, there is no power introduced into the world invested with "the prerogative of infallibility in religious matters" and thus able to beat down all sceptical objection. And even if there were such a power, it would still be left to private judgment to make the crucial decision: for he who surrenders to an infallible authority first believes in his own judgment that that authority *is* infallible. In some way, then, we must bear our own burden and answer for our own faith or denial of faith; and if this be vanity we have been "made subject to vanity not willingly" but by reason of the nature of things. We are brought into contact with the Word that claims to be not of man; if it is of God, and if man is the offspring of God, it must make its own way and furnish its own authentication, creating the faith that recognizes and receives it.

Chapter Two

EXPOSTULATION

I. 6-9

I am astonished that you are so readily deserting Him Who called you in Christ's grace (and not because of your own merits) for another, a second, gospel, which is no gospel at all. ["I marvayle that ye are so sone turned (from Christ

which called you by grace) unto another Gospell" (Cranmer.)) *But then the fact is, there are some individuals who are unsettling you in your true allegiance, and who would distort—yea, reverse—the Gospel of Christ, so that it might appear to stand for the very opposite of what it really teaches. But though we ourselves, or even an angel from Heaven (if such a thing were conceivable!), should preach to you any other gospel than that which we have preached to you hitherto, God's curse be upon him! As we told you before, when we were with you, so I repeat now, If any one preach to you any other gospel than that which you received, God's curse be upon him!*

Here the strain and tension are felt at once. "This is the sole instance where St. Paul omits to express his thankfulness in addressing any church" (Lightfoot). Instead the note struck is one of pained surprise. Manifestly there is serious business to be got at without delay, and the subject is not one of religious stimulation or general edification but of vehement protest. And why? For certainly the Galatian congregations show no sign of falling off in their "interest in religion." They are by way of becoming *more* "religious" and of multiplying their religious interests and activities. They are showing a new zeal for pious observances (iv. 10) and perhaps also for the study of Holy Scripture. But this new zeal is not unto life but unto death. They have accelerated their pace but lost their direction. They are swerving at a point where to swerve may be fatal.

I am astonished that you are so readily—or perhaps "so soon," so soon after your conversion—deserting Him Who called you in Christ's grace and going over to another, a second, gospel which is no gospel at all. "He says, *I marvel*, not only by way of reproof . . . but also in order to show that the opinion he had of them [hitherto] was a favourable and exalted one" (Chrysostom). "Jerome thinketh that Paul meant to interpret this word *Galathians* by alluding to the

Hebrew word *Galath*, which is as much as to say 'fallen' or 'carried away.' As though he would say: 'Ye are right *Galathians* both in name and in deed,' that is to say 'fallen' or 'removed away' " (Luther).¹

This new zeal for "religion," then, is in fact a zeal for another and different gospel; and another gospel there cannot be. There may well be a twofold (or manifold) presentation of the one Gospel, and in that sense a Gospel to the Jewish race and a Gospel to the Gentile races (ii. 7) but the distinction is not in the message but in those who receive it. For there cannot be an alternative and contradictory Word of God, a Gospel A and a Gospel B (or A^b or A + B!).

There cannot be a universal, international gospel of grace *and* an exclusive, aristocratic gospel of race.

But then I know very well that this change and unsettlement is none of your own doing. *There are some* individuals *who are* disturbing you in your allegiance to the Faith. Yes, they want to tamper with and *distort the Gospel of Christ!* That is the real significance of their activities among you, though assuredly it must be very far from their avowed intention.

For these pseudo-brothers (ii. 4), are they not "Jewish Christians" whose aims are naturally of the highest? Verily they are religious men and patriots, jealous for the honour of God and His chosen race. It is true their apostleship is "of men"; they represent a religious party; but are they the less zealous on that account? And have they not a

¹ Luther favoured the theory that the Galatians were Teutons. "Some think that the Germans are descended of the Galathians; neither is this divination, perhaps, untrue. For the Germans are not unlike them in nature. And I myself am constrained to wish my countrymen more steadfastness and constancy. For in all things that we do, at the first brunt we be very hot, but when the heat of our affections is allayed anon we become more slack. . ."

Curiously, the theory has been revived in some Nazi circles. Both the Galatians and the Galileans were Teutons—and Jesus was a Galilean!

case? If they seek to make "Jewish Christians" of you, too, if they would—have you circumcised and instructed in the Law of Moses and adopted into the commonwealth of Israel—have they not a case? Have they not told you that the Jewish Law was ordained by God and that all its ordinances are of Divine appointment? Was it not to Israel that the oracles of God were committed? (Rom. iii. 2). To the chosen race pertain not the sonship, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Worship, and the promises—yea, and the holy patriarchs also, and, according to earthly descent, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself? (Rom. ix. 4, 5). Of all this they must remind you continually. And could there be, therefore, more zealous men than those who aim at being Jewish *and* Christian, believers in a blood-faith, a race-religion, *and* in Christ? Yea, could there be a more pious movement than this of the Jewish Christian Party which aims at proselytizing all Christian congregations and incorporating them in a "Jewish Christian" Church ruled from Jerusalem; which therefore aims at making you *Galatian-Israelites*, and doubtless all other Gentile congregations hyphenated Israelites in the same way—namely, by circumcision and subjection to the Mosaic Law? Who knows but there might soon, on these terms, be a union between the Jewish Christian Church and the National Mosaic Church, between the successors of Annas and Caiaphas and the Apostles of Christ? Then indeed would the offence of the Cross altogether cease. Then indeed would Jerusalem be the queen-mother of the world. Then indeed would the Faith make conquest of all nations, and Israel would be over all! For so is it not written: "*In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*"? (Zech. viii. 23).

Yet I, Paul, declare to you that these same zealous men

would, as to the real effect of their work among you, pervert the Gospel and enslave your souls. For is it indeed to bring Good News *to* you that they have reached out to Galatia, or is it rather to make good news *of* you, as spoils and trophies of their cause? Do they not desire you that they may glory *in* you and *over* you (vi. 13), as recruits won to *their* cause and subjects to *their* kingdom? Yes, what they offer you is Christ *and* circumcision, grace *and* law, the Gospel *and* subjection to the racial supremacy of Israel! And this verily is another gospel!

Well, *though we, or even an angel from Heaven, should preach to you any other gospel—God's curse be upon him*, or us or whosoever should be guilty of that final sacrilege! For "he who but partially pares away the image on a royal coin renders the whole spurious" (Chrysostom). Even an angel is a messenger, and a messenger's responsibility is to deliver the message as it was delivered to him; he must neither add to it nor take from it; else it becomes another message, and the false, mingling with the true, turns the very truth into a lie.

Evangelical Intolerance?

Is there then no escape from the *odium theologicum*? Must every faith, every political ideology, in proportion as it is vehemently believed, be held intolerantly? "Those who are really convinced that they have advanced science would demand, not freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the old views by the new ones" (Lenin). A *Weltanschauung* cannot exist as one party with another: it "imperiously demands that it be fully and exclusively recognized" (Hitler). Is not the Pauline Gospel equally as imperious and exclusive? Yes, it is intolerant also. And here is the edge of the abyss! The intolerance of the Faith is saved from passing over into its infernal travesty only by being held in the presence of God

in Christ. When it ceases to be the intolerance of humbled and self-criticizing men whose confidence is in God and whose glory is in the Cross of Christ—when it becomes the intolerance of partisans whose zeal for the truth passes over into the pride of championship and the lust of power—then the step is taken, into the abyss; faith becomes infidelity and truth anti-truth.

In a fallen world the tension between truth and its spiritual sanctions on the one hand and human law and its earthly sanctions on the other—this tension must always exist. Truth is imperative but requires a *moral* obedience; that is an obedience conditioned in freedom; law may be both imperative and *coercive*, and to that extent immoral and utilitarian. Human law sets the individual or the group in the context of the State with its need for order and material well-being; truth sets them in the presence of God with His demand for righteousness, and therefore for *voluntary* obedience. Thus when the State takes over “religion” and constitutes itself the defender and interpreter of “truth,” it tends to demoralize “religion” and “truth” in the process, for the State cannot surrender the necessity for exalting order above righteousness, discipline above truth, law above love, the temporal above the eternal: it is apt therefore to “rationalize” this necessity by identifying itself with God. Thus when the Pauline anathema is taken over by the temporal power it becomes the language of persecution, and this is the moral abyss on the edge of which the Church herself also, in her own evangelical intolerance, forever stands. Nevertheless the true intolerance of the Gospel is nothing if not an intolerance for whatever would deny the freedom of the human spirit. Its most vehement anathema is an anathema hurled against those who, in the name of God, would bring men under a yoke of bondage (v. 1, 12–14; vi. 12–14). Therefore also the spiritual instinct of the Church in the actual sinful world is always toward protest and

detachment. She stands on the frontiers of the State and of civilization, interrogating all their values and witnessing to the tension between the righteousness of man and the righteousness of God.

But also there is another question which arises out of this Pauline remonstrance. What is the implication of this protest against any departure from the form of doctrine as at first delivered? Is the Christian religion fixed in an inalterable formula? When the Judaizers in Galatia sought a "re-statement" of Christianity in harmony with traditional Jewish tenets, were they following a course inadmissible in principle as well as mistaken in its particular applications? Is there no room for syncretism in religion, no place for any *rapprochement* between Christianity and other systems of belief?

Now the reply to these interrogatories, in their relation to this Epistle and to the passage immediately before us, is that neither religion in the abstract nor a systematized Christianity is here being discussed; the reference throughout is to the *Gospel*. That a principle of development, an extension and modification of doctrine, a certain syncretistic activity, are observable in Paul's own religious history who can deny? What a synthesis of thought and faith is represented by the Hebrew Bible itself, on which he was brought up! And in Paul himself, a Hebrew by birth and training, a Roman by citizenship, and living in a world impregnated with Hellenistic culture, the process was continued. The point is that, after his conversion, all these influences were organized round one vital centre—the Gospel. This was the datum, the one given thing, the dynamic point round which the whole circumference was described. For a circle can have only one centre: a new centre means a new circle: and it was for this given and inalterable centre, and not for its circumferential developments, that Paul was contending. And this, we say, was the Good News of God and of the

Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil world by the will of our God and Father. This was the News, the evangel, the Given Thing, not "of men" nor "by man." The grace of God, the sin of man, the atonement of Christ, the gift of the Spirit and of righteousness unto life eternal through faith alone—there was no other gospel. Anathema, then, on whomsoever would mislead the simple by making a new centre and persuading them that it confirmed the one circle!

Withal this Gospel stood not in the certificature of men nor of angels nor of the Church herself but of God. The Church may presently certify the written Gospels, but the *Gospel* certifies the Church.

"Now seeing the Church might receive and allow such and so many Gospels as it would, therefore the Church (say the Schoolmen) is above the Gospel. A goodly argument, forsooth! I approve the Scripture, *ergo* I am above the Scripture! John Baptist acknowledgeth and confesseth Christ, therefore he is above Christ! The Church approveth the Christian faith and doctrine, therefore the Church is above them! [But] . . . thou hast here a plain text like a thunderbolt, wherein Paul subjecteth both himself and an Angel from Heaven and the Doctors upon earth and all other teachers and masters whatsoever. . . . For they ought not to be Masters, Judges or Arbiters, but only witnesses, disciples and confessors."—*Luther*.

For the Gospel, witnessed to in the Scriptures and by the Church, is nothing if not the Word of God. If Luther would equate the Word with the Scriptures he goes beyond the necessities of his argument. It is the Word that generates and sustains the Scriptures as also it creates the Church—which, nevertheless, is not simply the creature of the Word but the Body of Christ!

And now the Pauline expostulation strikes again the personal note and becomes autobiographical.

APOSTOLIC CERTIFICATION

I. 10-12

For now am I conciliating men—or God? Do I seek to please men? For if I were still pleasing men I should be no servant—no slave—of Christ. But I certify you, brothers, that the Gospel preached by me is not according to man. For as for me, I neither received it from man nor was I taught it by man, but it came to me by a revelation, an apocalypse, of Jesus Christ.

For now am I conciliating men? Does it look like it? Does any one suppose that I am canvassing for human approval? Is it suggested by those who would have you conform to the way of the Circumcisionists that I myself have no fixed principle in this matter; that I am for circumcision in Jerusalem and against it in Galatia, seeking only to conciliate the ruling opinion? Or is it even suggested that, having sought overmuch to please men, I carry an uneasy conscience, and that, in fact, I have been known to conform to the practice of circumcision now and then, in the hope of conciliating—God? Do I indeed seek to please men? Am I to be accounted even now, after all I have endured for the sake of Christ, a mere men-pleaser? Am I speaking loudly and vehemently simply because I am—unsure of myself? Am I a mere partisan, forced at last to take sides on an issue about which I have no real conviction, and seeking to win supporters because my personal leadership is in danger? Is it possible that you should so misunderstand what I am now saying and am about to say? Nay, verily, with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment! (1 Cor. iv. 3) For if I were still concerned with pleasing men—yea, or conciliating God!—either by circumcision or uncircumcision—I should be no servant of Christ. Pleasing men and being Christ's willing bondservant are completely incompatible roles!

No; I am engaged with you in no merely human disputation. This is not a controversy between "Jewish Christians" and "Paulist Christians." The case stands otherwise. It is a controversy between you and—God. I am contending for nothing other than the Gospel of God. *For I certify you, brothers, that the Gospel preached by me is not according to man.* There is the issue. *For I myself neither received it from man, nor was I taught it: "I did not learn it as one learns a lesson" (Lightfoot); but it came to me by a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The Question

So once more we encounter the personal Pauline question. Who is this man who claims the authority of an individual divine revelation? Do we not tremble for his sanity as we tremble for, say, Swendenborg's? To be sure, this absolute claim, resting, as it would appear upon nothing but itself, seems to be qualified a little later. The man Paul has no thought of a proud, exclusive isolation. What is he in himself but a sinful man overtaken and apprehended by the amazing grace of God? He is prepared in all humility and candour to submit himself to the judgment of the faithful—will even seek it, lest by any means and on any point he should be self-deceived (ii. 2). Or is it that, after all, the contemplated possibility is only that of being deceived concerning the soundness of the faithful themselves and their attitude toward his work? But, when all has been discussed and pronounced upon, the fact remains—"the Gospel preached by me is not of human origin; it came by revelation of Jesus Christ—the Jesus Christ Who stands on the other side of death, and on the other side of all human wisdom and authority."

This is the Paul who is before us and who remains for the world an unsolved enigma. Shall we be content to deplore—and admire—in him that touch of madness which raises a

man a dangerous inch above his contemporaries and gives him power in excess of that which pure sanity could generate? Does not the Dionysiac enthusiast always prevail over the calm philosopher? Does not Luther, "a madman insanely convinced about matters in which there can be no conviction," prevail over Erasmus? "If you want to get men to act reasonably, you must set about persuading them in a maniacal manner. The very sane precepts of the founders of religions are only made infectious by means of enthusiasms which to a sane man must appear deplorable."¹

And we have liberty of course to psychologize Paul. When did this "revelation" begin? Did it not begin, after all, in a very understandable human way? Was not the "apocalypse" in the first place the face of the martyred Stephen? "And all that sat in the Sanhedrin, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel . . . And Saul approved of his being put to death" (Acts vi. 15, vii. 55 ff.). For so persecution may run on the perilous edge of conviction, and to declare "He is worthy of death" may mean, "*or I am!*" Was not this, then, the beginning of that "apocalypse of Jesus Christ", received by Saul into mind and memory and conscience and fiercely thrust below the surface of consciousness into that most secret and active region where "apocalypses" are incubated? Even so, whence came that light in the face of Stephen, that last, more than human cry of interceding love? We are left with the same unanswered question, which sets its own interrogation-mark against all the wisdom of this world.

For the rest, let it be noted that Paul's emphasis in this autobiographical section is not upon his own "experience" save as that experience is a finger pointing to the Gospel of God. He does not here particularize upon the experience itself, and when he touches directly upon it he remains, as we have said, "object" rather than "subject":—"When it

¹ Mr. Scrogon in "Crome Yellow": Aldous Huxley.

pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me." . . . The experience, as a pointing finger, is important because of the Divine action to which it points, and only as such is it to be remarked. But then such it is, and so, according to Paul, it must be given its due significance. Thus Luther's comment is relevant—"In times past, when I was but a young divine, methought Paul did unwisely in glorying so oft of his calling in all his epistles: but I did not understand his purpose. For I knew not that the ministry of God's Word was so weighty a matter."

And so the personal relation continues.

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

I. 13-17

You heard from me while I was with you of my conduct while I was in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and ravaged it, and how I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age and race in my intense zeal for the traditions of my ancestors ["a much more fervent maintainer of the traditions of the elders" (Tyndale)]. But the God Who had set me apart even from my birth called me by His grace, and when He was pleased—"when He saw fit"—to reveal His Son in me (and thus through me) that I might preach Him among the nations, then at once, instead of consulting with flesh and blood—"with any human being"—or going up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, I went away into Arabia, and then came back again to Damascus.

You heard from my own lips the story of my past career in Judaism. You know that whatever may be the zeal of these new apostles for the religion of the Jews, my own zeal was not less fervent! In this matter my record speaks for itself. My religion possessed me. The history and tradition of my people, their national faith, their race-purity and

predestined race-supremacy—my zeal for these things ate me up. Thus my nationalism was not only a profession, it was a career! and *I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my fellows*. No doubt, in all this I was ambitious, not to say covetous; and so were we all. No doubt we had our rifts and rivalries and vehemently desired the chief seats for ourselves: nevertheless as patriots and religious men we stood together for the common cause, and were ready to trample on the feet of any who stood in our way. And so it was enough for me that the followers of the new Way did not march with our Party; it was enough that they lived on our national soil but set their Christ in some sort above our Party and our cause: *I persecuted them beyond measure, I ravaged and harried them from city to city, breathing out threatenings and slaughter.*

Moreover, in all this my righteousness was the armour in which I trusted. I was a man set apart and separate from sinners; and so it was with us all. We made our boast in God. We made our boast in Him as the God of the heavens and the earth, but more especially as the God of our own sacred soil and our own race-covenant and our own ancestral heroes and our own traditions. Yet who was He? Did we who made our boast in Him really know Him? Were we in truth *His* ministers, doing *His* pleasure and hearkening unto the voice of *His* word? Were not we rather the underlords of His vineyard doing business in His name, and was not He—the Name? We were religious men, but was not our religion a refuge and defence from the Living God Himself? Was it not our cunning hiding-place which concealed our very concealment, if not from Him, at least from ourselves? And if one day we must stand before Him, was not our righteousness the mask and habit in which we hoped to show ourselves—to Him, even as every day we persuaded ourselves that it showed us to ourselves and to others, as righteous men?

Such in any case was my course in time past in Judaism. *But when the God Who had set me apart from my very birth called me by His grace* and brought to its fruitage His own most secret work upon me—then everything was changed.

The action now passes to God! "Observe how words are accumulated to tell upon the one point on which he is insisting—the sole agency of God as distinct from his own efforts" (Lightfoot). Up to this point Paul (Saul) himself has been the actor: "*my* conduct"—"*I* persecuted the Church"—"*I* ravaged it"—"*I* advanced in Judaism"—"*my* intense zeal"; but now the sole actor is the Living God. "God set me apart"—God "*called me*"—God "*revealed His Son in me.*" There is no relation of the Damascus *experience* as such; the particularized narrative is not reproduced. Here it is not "the Story of My Conversion" but the story of *God's* election, *God's* converting grace, *God's* revelation of His Son. What had happened had come upon him unsought, like a bolt from the blue heaven. He had been prepared for it through every turn of his career; but of this he himself had known nothing. Of his own choice he had joined himself in Jerusalem to the sect of the Pharisees, the "Separated"; but God had "separated" him from his very birth.

When therefore He was pleased to reveal His Son in me— then I was slain and made alive! We are not to stress the preposition "*in*" as if it supported a mystical emphasis. It was not the unveiling of Paul's "better self," the unsealing of the springs of a natural religious genius, nor even a disclosure of "the Christ within," the "indwelling Ideal"; it was the manifestation to the man Paul of One in Whose presence he fell blinded to the earth; not an out-shining from within but a down-shining from above. Yet in truth the light penetrated to the innermost, and in that sense the revelation was made *in* Paul.

"The Gospel is a divine word that cometh down from heaven and is revealed by the Holy Ghost . . . yet in such sort, notwithstanding, that the outward word must go before. For Paul himself had no inward revelation until he had heard the outward word from heaven."—*Luther*.

If therefore we are to recognize a mystical note at all in this description of supreme spiritual crisis, then we must distinguish between the mysticism which means God's reaction to the questing soul, and that which means the reaction of the soul to the self-revealing God. We must distinguish between the pantheizing mysticism which finds the centre of its infinitely expanding circle in the individual religious consciousness, and the evangelical mysticism which has its centre in the I AM of God and His self-authenticating, faith-creating Word. We must set on the one side the mysticism which passes the divine light through the spectrum of the soul (which itself, thus, by its own quality, "tests for" God and immediately knows Him), and on the other side the mysticism which prefers to speak of being known of God (iv. 9), and which finds Him through the revelation of His own Word and work. Both schools have made their own contribution, but it is with the second that Paul must be associated. It pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul—by crisis and encounter. "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*" The "thou" and the "Me" met, and time merged into eternity on the Damascus road.

Therefore, *at once, instead of consulting with flesh and blood or going up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me—I withdrew for a season into solitude. I did indeed meet brother Ananias of Damascus and certain of the other local brothers (Acts ix. 19). Yea, after my baptism I preached Christ in the Damascus synagogues to the scandal and wrath of my fellow-countrymen, who sought to kill me. But I consulted with no human authority nor went up to the Apostles at Jerusalem. I might have done so, but in fact I*

did not do so; and since some have come among you now who are forward to speak to you in the name of Jerusalem and of the pillars of the Church there, it is well that you should know how matters stand. It is well you should know it was not from Jerusalem nor from any human authority that I received my commission. No; when it pleased God to reveal His Son to me *that I might preach Him among the nations*, I consulted with no one: *I went away into Arabia*, into the land where Moses beheld the glory of God and Elijah heard the still small Voice after the earthquake, wind and fire! And then, when I *came back* I returned to *Damascus*, and to my preaching.

The Question

Is this then—history? Truly it is *historical*! It is a personal record which deals with actions and events in time and place, and which, to that extent, is subject to historical and textual examination. But the essential significance and content of the record is above history. “God set me apart, called me by His grace, revealed His Son in me”—these are actions that belong to the eternal side of life or they have no existence at all. They have indeed an aspect toward time; they produce an experience that may be examined psychologically—when it can be recaptured! But only so! “Like through like. Otherwise men depress the past to their own level” (Nietzsche).

Perhaps for the moment it is enough for us to note as much. Can we be confident that we have found the “level” of any age or any experience or any literature simply by reporting our own “level” view of it? No man can cross the frontiers of the eternal at will, but neither has any the right to deny the existence of these frontiers and what lies beyond them. No man has the right to deny the incomprehensible on the ground that he cannot comprehend it! But it must be true that for the world—for the world whose level of

verification and belief is the externally actual, the visible-temporal—Paul's witness remains a problem or an offence. It remains so not because it belongs to human history but because it belongs, or claims to belong, to the history of God.

UP TO JERUSALEM

I. 18-24

Then after three years—three years after my conversion—I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter—to make his acquaintance; (lit. to “history” him)—and I stayed with him fifteen days; but of the other apostles I saw none, only James, the brother of the Lord. (What I am writing, mark, is no falsehood, I call God to witness! I am stating the simple facts.) Then I went to the districts of Syria and Cilicia. Personally I remained unknown—“unknown by sight,” lit. “by face”—to the Christian congregations of Judæa (“to the churches of Judæa which are in Christ”); only they heard that “our persecutor of former days is now preaching the Faith he once attacked”; and they praised God on my account.

*I went up to Jerusalem. Cf. Acts ix.—“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles [Peter and James], and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians [Grecian Jews]: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea [Stratonis] and sent him forth to Tarsus”—*All of which is passed over in the Epistle save for the points which show that, excepting a sojourn of fifteen days with

Peter and a meeting with the Lord's brother, he was still, after three years, unacquainted with the Apostles and personally unknown to the Judæan Christians outside Jerusalem.

to visit Peter. "He says 'to see Peter,' but he does not say to *see* (idein) but to *survey* (historesai), a word which those who seek to become acquainted with great and splendid cities apply to themselves" (Chrysostom).—"Paul granteth that he was with the Apostles but not with all the Apostles. Howbeit he declareth that he went up to Jerusalem to them, not commanded, but of his own accord, not to learn anything of them but to see Peter. . . . All his words therefore are so framed that they prove his Gospel not to be of man. . . . Also he denieth that he was constrained to teach the Gospel as the Apostles had prescribed. The whole effect, then, of this matter lieth in this word *to see*" (Luther).

they praised God on my account—"they glorified God in me"; "not because I taught that circumcision and the Law of Moses ought to be kept, but for the preaching of faith and for the edifying of the churches by the ministry of the Gospel. Ye therefore have the testimony not only of the people of Damascus and of Arabia but also of the whole catholic or universal Church of Judæa" (Luther).

"See here again how accurately he observes the rule of his humility; he says not, 'they admired me,' 'they applauded' or 'were astonished at me,' but ascribes all to Divine grace by the words, *they glorified God in me*" (Chrysostom).



You Galatians then may accept it that these are the facts. I am what I am. It pleased God Who called me by His grace to reveal His Son to me. Whatever human testimony to Jesus Christ had reached me, this I had rejected.

I was a persecutor of the faith. No human voice arrested me, no human argument convinced me; I was changed by an apocalypse of the Lord. Therefore by the grace of God I am what I am: Paul an apostle, not of men nor by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead. I am no renegade from any "Jewish Christian" party; I never owned allegiance to any such sect: nor did I receive my commission and apostleship from any of the authorities at Jerusalem; for three years after my conversion I never went near Jerusalem nor was I known, except by repute, to the churches of Judæa. I was set apart and called and commissioned neither by the Circumcision nor by the Uncircumcision, but by the grace of the God Who chose to reveal to me His Son.

The Question

What then shall we say to all these things? Perhaps there is much here—the vehemence of protestation concerning Jerusalem and the Apostles—which no longer excites us. If we gather that Paul must declare on oath that he visited Jerusalem not more than once in three years, what can it matter to us? And if we learn that the hot debate turns on circumcision or uncircumcision, is it not the same? It is as if we looked through the window at a man in the house across the way excitedly addressing some company of his fellows. We behold his gesticulations but we cannot hear his voice nor see his audience, and we do not know about what he is disputing nor why he should be so vehement. As we look on at the dumb show it seems only odd and pantomimical. The man surely is acting strangely, for how can anything be quite as serious as he seems to make it out to be, when all the while it is unintelligible and presumably irrelevant *to us*?

Yet actually the issue *is* relevant. Actually the issue may be stated thus: Is there a Gospel of God that is a Gospel for

all races and nations, a Word for the world, or are we left at best with no more than a racial religion ambitious to bestow its ideology and its law—on terms—upon mankind? Here at any rate is a subject for consideration, not only in the house across the way but in our own house also! Or we may put the question thus: Is there a Gospel of God which, above all systems and religions, is in itself true? And, if this is so, is there also a Church of God? And again if so what is the relation between Church and Gospel? Does the Church judge and confirm the Gospel, or does the Gospel judge and confirm the Church? And if the Church cannot exist without the Gospel, can the Gospel exist without the Church? Such questions as these are forced upon us as we consider the case of Paul, who, set for the defence of the Gospel, is ready to defy not only the world and the devil but also angels and ministers of grace if they appear to swerve from the true confession.

Chapter Three

THE FIGHT FOR LIBERTY

II. 1-5

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took with me Titus also. But you must understand I went up by revelation—by order of the Lord and not of the authorities at Jerusalem!—and laid before them for consultation the Gospel which I preach among the non-Jewish peoples—that is, the Gospel of grace, of salvation by faith apart from any conformity to the Jewish ceremonial Law; but I did so, in the first instance, privately, to those of repute, lest in any way I might be running, or had run, to no purpose.

Nevertheless not even Titus, who was with me, Greek (Gentile) though he was, was compelled to be circumcised.

And this I remark on account of the false brothers—"pseudo-brothers!"—brought in by stealth, who came covertly in order to spy out the liberty which we possess in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into bondage—reduce us to the abject slavery which they thought was good for us!—to whom we yielded by the submission they sought to exact, no, not for a single hour. And this we did so that the truth of the Gospel—its complete integrity as a Gospel of grace and of soul-freedom—might continue with you as your assured possession.

Does this interval of fourteen years date from Paul's conversion or from his former visit to Jerusalem? The question, important in its relation to Pauline chronology, need not detain us here. The point is that Paul's personal connection with the Jerusalem Church was slight. In the first instance he went up "to see Peter"—not to be examined by him; and now he went up "by revelation" and not by order of the Jerusalem authorities. He was an equal among equals, an apostle among apostles. "He that wrought effectually for Peter . . . the same was mighty for me" (ii. 8).



And now, before resuming Paul's narrative, we may pause for a Scriptural parenthesis, turning to those passages in the Acts of the Apostles which give us the background for this relation (Acts x, xi, xv, xxi).

Parenthesis

While Peter yet spake (to the Gentile company assembled in the house of Cornelius in Cæsarea) the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the Circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. And the apostles and brethren that were in

Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem they that were of the Circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them saying, Forasmuch as God gave them (the Gentile hearers) the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?

Now they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks (Gentiles), preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch to report upon the situation: who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul. (Brother Saul, now preaching the Gospel somewhere in his own native province, was surely the very man for this new and astonishing development in Syria!) And when he had found him he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch: a name born of the new inter-racial community-spirit, obliterating all other distinctions! Emerges now the new "nation," the new "people" (1 Peter ii. 9), the new spiritual race that absorbs and assimilates all races, and in which Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, bondman and freeman, become—Christians!

And now Antioch has in some measure, and unwittingly,

taken precedence of Jerusalem, the spiritual initiative passing from the mother Church, still in character a Jewish society, to the cosmopolitan daughter Church. Thus a concern for still wider missionary enterprise deepens in the Antioch community, so that it becomes the sense of the assembly, deeply felt to be the mind of the Spirit, that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for missionary work in the regions beyond. Which is accordingly done, and in due time also the missionaries return to *Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode a long time with the disciples.*

But certain men which came down from *Judæa* taught the brethren, "*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved.*" (How earnest their conviction, how obvious their case, how evident their zeal!) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them—Titus, it seems, among them—should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem they were received of the Church and of the Apostles and Elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

But again there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed—Pharisee-Christians, always "rising up," always vocal, always zealous, convinced and positive!—saying, "*That it was needful to circumcise the Gentile converts and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.*" And the Apostles and Elders came together to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, and after Peter,

Barnabas and Paul had addressed the assembly in support of the larger liberty, and James had favourably summed up, *it pleased the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: and they wrote letters by them*, officially repudiating the Circumcisionists, vindicating Paul and Barnabas as men *that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and laying upon the Gentile converts no other injunctions than to abstain from sexual irregularities, from meats offered in idol-sacrifices, from the flesh of strangled animals and from blood, in accordance with the Jewish Levitical law (Lev. xvii). It was perhaps a curious compromise which, while releasing the non-Jewish converts from circumcision, bound them (if the text stands) to a Jewish dietary: but in any case it was a compromise weighted on the side of spiritual freedom. *So they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle; which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.* Thus, for the time being, a major crisis was averted and the union of the Churches was saved.

But the controversy was by no means at an end. The religious mind is conservative, clinging to tradition and the authority of established forms and institutions. Does it not seem to belong to the very constitution of religion that it should bind men's consciences to fixed ordinances? Does not the religious mind need the sanction of forms and sacraments which link together the changing generations in one unchanging bond of authority and order? And if the appeal of race and nation can be commingled with the appeal of ancient religious tradition, is not the combination all but irresistible? Withal may not the righteousness which comes by obedience to traditional law become the last defence of the conscience from the demands of that inner holiness which the religious man must always recognize but can never achieve? And the Church is composed of religious men!

Even Apostles are religious men! They are also of necessity ecclesiastical statesmen! Even Apostles must make terms with actualities. *What* terms they make is always the crucial matter; but there is no escape on this earth from the tension between pure inspiration and urgent expediency.

Thus when Paul returns to Jerusalem at a later period, the welcome of the authorities, though personally cordial, is slightly embarrassed and anxious (Acts xxi). *And when we were come to Jerusalem the brethren received us gladly: and the day following Paul went with us unto James, and all the Elders were present. And (the salutations and gratulations being over) they said, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the Law; and they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk after the ancient customs. We intend no criticism, but it is important that you should appreciate our own situation, and we cannot deny that there is a distinct feeling of hostility toward you, very painful to us, among a section of our people. What is it therefore? The multitude must needs come together, for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a (Nazirite) vow on them; them take and purify thyself with them according to our ceremonial law (Numbers vi), and be at charges with them—pay the expenses of their temple sacrifices—that they may be free to shave their heads: and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing; but that thou thyself walkest orderly and keepest the Law.—As an act of conciliation, O brother Paul, and in the interests of peace, take this opportunity to make a gesture of obeisance toward our Jewish customs (including of course the necessary priestly offerings). And for the rest, be assured that it will in no wise compromise your own position regarding circumcision: for as touching the Gentiles which believe we have*

written, as you know, and concluded that they observe no such thing."

Paul, probably reluctantly, consented, but the plan miscarried, thanks to the riotous intervention of a faction of Asiatic Jews. *Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the Temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the people and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the (Chosen) People, and the Law, and this Place; and further brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath polluted this holy Place!"*

The date of this last episode, in relation to the Galatian epistle, is, for our present purpose, unimportant. The point is that it was in such an atmosphere of racial and religious intolerance that the apostolic leaders in Jerusalem had to govern the Jewish Christian communities; in such wind and weather they had to steer the Jewish Christian Church. They were set over congregations of believers, many of whom, sincerely as they believed in the Gospel, saw it only as framed within the national, traditional Faith. They were Hebrew Christians accepting without question the morality of a religious nationalism and the sacred duty of maintaining the ancient institutions of Israel; therefore—Jesus and Judaism, the Christian Church and the Jewish State, the Gospel and Circumcision, the Messianic Kingdom of God and the racial supremacy of Israel!

In all such couplings and conjunctions it is the *near* end, the present, tangible, earthly end, of his creed that a man most readily grasps. To be a hyphenated believer is to stress that end of the hyphen which comes first. To be by profession a "Hebrew-Christian" was after all to be first and foremost a Hebrew. To such believers, then, Paul's

Gospel was indeed,—as also to some of the Apostle's more modern critics!—an alien thing superimposed upon the primitive simplicities of the Faith. It was a destructive heresy charged with treason against God's Law and God's Israel, putting no difference between Jew and Gentile, and welcoming the uncircumcised and the unclean into the fellowship of the elect.

With such material to work upon, or at least with an active minority so minded, Peter and James had done well to maintain the union of the churches and to secure the assent of the Jewish Christian Assembly to so tolerant a concordat as that embodied in the Jerusalem resolution. But the Circumcisionists, the "Pharisees which believed," were implacable and active and concerned to carry their opposition and their own propaganda into the Pauline churches themselves. This was the situation, and if the Apostles themselves were now and again carried out of their course, it was because of these rocks and shoals and the strength of the opposing current.

The Church Fallible

So the Church this side the Resurrection is never wholly herself! She is the Church *militant*, in conflict even with herself, struggling with incipient schism and discordant judgments; for she also carries within herself the chaotic elements of unredeemed Creation. She also in every age is "subject to vanity"; she is natural *and* regenerate, flesh *and* spirit, delighting in the Word of God and yet perceiving another law warring in her members and bringing her into captivity to the word of man. She is composed of fallible and sinful men and women who, in their very zeal for religion and righteousness, in their zeal for the Scriptures and the sacred ordinances, may yet exalt their very loyalties and pieties against God. So through all the ages of her humiliation the Church must say to her idolaters, "Why

callest thou me infallible? There is none infallible save One, even God." It is the riddle of history and of grace that to a fallible Church has been committed—the Gospel of God.

And so we return to Paul's narration.

THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

I went up again to Jerusalem . . . by revelation. Understand clearly that I went up by order of the Lord and not of men! And so at every turn this Pauline problem meets us, insistent and disturbing! In his independency he moves forever on the edge of the abyss—without faltering. It seems as if he will defy not only the world, but if need be the Church also—he, Paul. "They who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me" (ver. 6). "Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me"—no matter at all *if*, that is, they would seem to impugn his Gospel as a Gospel—the Gospel—for mankind, and reduce it to a racial cult. It is not of himself that he is sure; his assurance centres upon the Gospel; this is the Everlasting Yea which has announced itself, authenticated itself, and pealed through all the recesses of his being. Churches, Councils, Apostles, Elders take their authority from the Word, and not the Word from them. Churches, Councils, human authorities may be unsettled, are manifestly being unsettled, and may deny what once they affirmed and tear down what once they built up (ver. 18); but the Gospel cannot change; it is the Word of God that is settled for ever.

And yet—I *laid before them*—before the mother Church and Apostolic Council—the Gospel which I preach . . . lest in any way I might be running, or had run, to no purpose.—"What is this, O Paul? Thou who neither at the beginning nor after three years wouldest confer with the Apostles, dost thou now confer with them after fourteen years are past,

lest thou shouldest have run in vain? . . . But his object was the complete satisfaction of his accusers" (Chrysostom). "Not that Paul doubted that he ran, or had run, in vain . . . but for that many did think that Paul had [done so]. . . . Wherefore in going up to Jerusalem . . . he meant to remedy this evil, that by this conference all men might plainly see his Gospel to be in no point contrary to the doctrine of the other Apostles, to the end that by this means he might stop the mouths of his adversaries" (Luther).

So the tension between Paul's independency and his Churchmanship, between his repudiation of any commission or certification from men, and his need of it—this tension exists! There is a consensus that is of value and must be sought. To seek it, to obtain it, Paul must even go up to Jerusalem "by revelation," by order of the Lord. The Church *has* authority and the Council *has* a certifying, confirming function—under the Gospel. Yes, it is of moment that all men should plainly see Paul's Gospel to be in no point contrary to the general Apostolic doctrine. Such confirmation surely will not add to the truth itself, but it will confirm or correct the faith of men and—stop the mouths of the adversaries!

And verily it is of the Lord that Apostles should have need of one another and that all should stand together in the united conscience and witness of the Church! Yea, if Peter is fallible and reprovable must not Paul be fallible and reprovable also? And He that wrought effectually for Paul, hath He not wrought effectually also for Peter and John and James? Therefore they have need of one another. Yea, all the saints share this need, and fellowship is the true medium of *paracletion*!

For I would that ye Colossians knew what great conflict, what heart-yearning, I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: that their hearts might be comforted—paracleted—being knit together in

love unto the full assurance—plerophory!—of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even Christ (Col. ii. 1, 2). May they have all the wealth of conviction that comes from insight (Moffatt). May they be *paracleted* through fellowship into full discernment and conviction of divine truth.—*I long to see you, Romans . . . that I may be comforted—paracleted—together with you by the mutual faith* (lit. “the in-one-another faith”) *both of you and me* (Rom. i. 11, 12). The united witness of the Church to the Gospel does not establish the Gospel, but it establishes the faith of the saints and testifies to the world.

So I consulted the brethren; *nevertheless not even Titus . . . was compelled to be circumcised*. Yes, I not only submitted my Gospel and practice to their judgment, but also I brought with me a *test case* in the person of Titus. So unmistakably a Gentile, Titus was a living example of my Gospel course, so that my heresy, if heresy it was, was *there* in flesh and blood, seen of all men and inviting condemnation. Seen certainly by the so-called brothers of the Pharisee faction who had insinuated themselves amongst us, and condemned by them! but not condemned by the authorities!

And as for these so-called *brothers, brought in by stealth, who came . . . to spy out our liberty*—what must be said of them? Were they indeed *false*—furtive and conspiratorial, and as it were muttering behind their cloaks, conscious of villainy? On the contrary, were they not religious men who had to live with themselves and render account of themselves to their own consciences every day? If they joined themselves to the Church was it not in order to “exert their influence” within it in the “best interests” of the nation and the people of God? Yes, they too were high-minded emissaries, zealous apostles! But they were apostles “of men,” and to them the question, “Is it true? Is it right?” meant, “Does it serve our national interests? Does it

conform to our tradition, our institutions, our Party?" To them the words Jew, Synagogue, Temple, Sanhedrin, Nation, were sacred—but hardly the word Man! hardly "the world"! They were pseudo-brothers therefore, whose heart spake another dialect than ours: *to whom we yielded submission, no, not for a single hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.* That was, that is, our conflict. Let it be repeated: we are not ignorant of the religion of race and law, of discipline and hierarchy: we were born into it; but, when it pleased God to reveal His Son to us, we saw in that revelation the new Man in whom all tribes and peoples lost—and found—theirself; we saw all religions of race and caste being dissolved into a world-faith, a Gospel for all mankind. Yes, we ourselves were dissolved! All our confidence in the superiority of our own blood, all our pride in our own ancestral and exclusive culture, all our secret, vindictive sense of power as members of a despised but consciously superior race predestined to world-domination—all these things and much more passed into dissolution. And what human power could have effected *that*? What but a divine apocalypse could so pluck a man up by the roots, turn his gain into loss, his pride into shame, and make the things before abhorred become for him the desire of all desires? Yet so it was, and is. We have seen the new glory, the fuller truth, the larger life, the greater liberty, and we dare not go back: we dare not—for your sakes!

Precisely here, then, is the conflict, at this point—whether the Gospel of God is to be set within the context of Humanity or limited to that of a single racial culture. "The apostle seemeth out of season to carry [his] . . . readers into the world: but generally under this word he comprehendeth the restoring which was looked for in Christ" (Calvin)—in *this* Christ Who is not merely the messiah of a romantic Jewish imperialism but the Restorer and Redeemer of mankind.

The Question

And is the conflict altogether a thing of the past? Is it over even in the Church herself? May not Christianity itself develop its own pseudo-immutabilities of order and tradition, and become a religion of Law? May not the Church as a spiritual nation come to be ruled by the imperial, dominating spirit of the nations of *this* world? May we not come to say "Our Lord" with the same possessive, exclusive and superior inflection that the ancient Jew reserved for "Our Law"—the proud inflection of an aristocracy? Do not our ecclesiastical Christianities very easily harden into a nationalism, an imperialism, of their own?

"When a nation enters Christ's Church, and takes her yoke upon its shoulders, *then* it formally joins itself to the cause of God, and separates itself from the evil world. When the civil magistrate defends the Christian faith, and sets it up in all honour in high places . . . *so far* he gives himself to God. . . . When men put aside a portion of their gains to God's service, *then* they sanctify those gains. . . . When a man hallows in his private conduct holy seasons, *this* is offering up of God's gifts to God, and sanctifying all seasons by the sacrifice of some. When a man who is rich . . . is in the midst of plenty and observes self-denial; when he plants and sows, but pays tithes; when he buys and sells, but withal gives largely to religion . . . in all these ways he circumcises himself from the world by the circumcision of Christ."—

*Newman.*¹

Is not this the language of a Church on her way to becoming a "nation" of *this* world, proud of *her* empire and ambitious to extend it, proud of *her* homage in high places and ambitious to enjoin it? Is not this the language of a Christianity that has become a Law and that extols a righteousness that is of the Law? And yet how religious and positive, and in

¹ "Sermons on Subjects of the Day."

its own way how right and persuasive, it must always be! Is not the church of "the Pharisees which believe" always with us, in our own hearts? And do we yet understand the Pauline protest? Is it that a tension must always exist between the idea and the institution, the spirit and the system; between Christ and Christianity, the Gospel and the Church?

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

II. 6-10

But those who are reputed to be something—"which seem to be great" (Tyndale), and to whom your new teachers now point you as having a spiritual authority superior to my own—these individuals (whatever they may have been as to their original advantages as eye-witnesses of Christ after the flesh, it makes no difference to me—God regards no man's outward position—no man's "face" (persona)—well, these persons of reputation imparted nothing to me—"had no additions to make to my Gospel" (Moffatt)—nor any corrections to offer! On the contrary, having seen that I have been entrusted with the Gospel to the Uncircumcision—the non-Jewish sphere—just as Peter with the Gospel to the Circumcision—the distinctively Jewish sphere (for He Who wrought—"energized"—for Peter for the apostleship to the Circumcision, wrought for me as well among the non-Jewish peoples) ["for he that wrought to Peter in to the apostleship of circumcision wrought also to me among the heathen" (Wyclif)]; and having recognized—been convinced of—the grace which was given to me, James and Cephas and John, the reputed "pillars" of the Church, gave the right hand of fellowship to myself and Barnabas, it being understood that our spheres of labour were to be distinct—that we should go to "the nations" and they to the Circumcision; only they laid it upon us that we were to remember the poor—we were to encourage our congregations to contribute for the relief of distressed and persecuted Jewish Christians in

Judæa—the *very thing I was diligent to do*—and needed no prompting on that score! (Acts xi. 29, 30) though indeed it may be necessary that I should prompt *you* (Gal. vi, I Cor. xvi. 1).

It is a man who speaks! Even Apostles are men! And we need not deny a certain rising inflection, a staccato tone, an echo of the old Saul the Pharisee. *Those who are reputed to be something—whatever they may have been, it makes no difference to me—the reputed “pillars”—the man Paul is speaking in bitterness of soul. “Here he not only does not defend the Apostles, but even presses hard upon these holy men, for the benefit of the weak” (Chrysostom). These persons of reputation, these who “seemed to be somewhat,” imparted nothing to me. “When told of my proceedings they added nothing, they corrected nothing, nor imparted to me any additional knowledge” (Chrysostom).*

Observe clearly, then, ye Galatians, how the case stands. What is before us is the Gospel of God for the whole race of men; either that or nothing! Verily there are many religions, many altars to gods known and unknown; but there is only one Gospel of God, namely, That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and gathering Jew and pagan, Greek and barbarian, into one fellowship of faith unto eternal life. And is this Gospel now on trial? Nay, it is we who are on trial! It is the Gospel that judges our apostleship! Yes, Cephas, James, John, Paul—all of us, are being judged by the Gospel, and not the Gospel by us!

Therefore in this final and crucial matter those reputed to be somewhat, the authorities and so-called “pillars of the Church,” make no difference to me. I make no difference to myself! In this final matter it is not our word that comes first or last, but the Gospel of God received by us and confirmed by the Spirit. For how was it with Cephas himself when, in the house of Cornelius, the Spirit fell upon the

Uncircumcised? Did he not say, *What was I that I could withstand God?* Even so are we all in this matter in His hands Who giveth the Word and the Spirit. And what then if Cephas himself, or James or John, or all of them, should presently turn aside in this selfsame matter and put a difference where God hath made none; would the Gospel be on trial, or they?

Yet in fact they accepted us on Gospel terms. *James and Cephas and John . . . gave the right hand of fellowship to myself and Barnabas.* Yes, they stood boldly with us on this ground, the only standing ground. It was as if all human differences were at last levelled out under the judgment of the Cross. There was no difference between Circumcision and Uncircumcision, Jew and pagan. Under the new and yet eternal reckoning we had come to see the solidarity of mankind in sin and in grace. All alike have come short; all alike are under wrath and under grace, under judgment and under mercy.

“Note that here is the very centre and kernel of all Scripture” (Luther). “*There is none that doeth good; whereby is meant that they have put off all sense of humanity*” (Calvin)—and through the recognition of this common lack, and the grace that meets it, comes the recovery of this same lost sense of human oneness! “Precisely when we recognize that we are sinners do we perceive that we are brothers” (Barth). The “dominant races” and the “subject races” are in the dock together, yea, in the *grave* together, that they may rise together. This is the new reckoning. This is the Gospel. And in this Gospel James and Cephas and John strike hands of fellowship with Paul and Barnabas.

Chapter Four

APOSTLES IN CONTROVERSY

II. 11-14

But when Peter came to Antioch I withstood him to his face, for he was to be condemned. For before certain emissaries came from James he was eating with the Gentiles— (Acts x. 28) *mixing freely with the non-Jewish, uncircumcised Christians, sitting at table with them and joining with them in the Christian agape; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, being afraid of those of the Circumcision, the converts “from” Judaism who were still so Judaic! and the rest of the Jews—the Christian Jews in Antioch at that time—dissembled with him in a body. (It was “dissembling” because the attitude they now assumed did not represent their personal convictions. It signified, on their own part and Peter’s, a change of policy rather than a change of heart), so that even Barnabas—of all men!—was carried away by their hypocrisy. (“The idea at the root of hypokrisis is not a false motive entertained but a false impression produced”—Lightfoot). But when I saw that they were not walking uprightly, when I saw that they were swerving aside from the straight course, according to the truth of the Gospel—the only criterion!—I said to Peter before them all, If you, a Jew born and bred, live, as you have certainly lived, after the Gentile manner, and not Judaically, according to Jewish ceremonial scruples—if you hold yourself free to do this, why do you now virtually compel the Gentiles—by the line you are now taking—to conform to Judaism (lit. “to Judaize”)?*

When Peter came to Antioch (presumably after the events of Acts xxi) I withstood him to his face. Chrysostom (Origen also, according to Jerome) invents a curious explanation of

the whole dispute. The expression, "I withstood him to the face," means, he argues, "I withstood him in appearance" and implies a *feint*, an apostolic *ruse*. For Peter, "fearing to perplex" the Jewish Christians by openly fraternizing with the uncircumcised, "changed his course with two objects secretly in view—both to avoid offending those Jews and to give Paul an opportunity for animadverting" upon the whole situation. "In Paul, who was well-acquainted with the facts, his withdrawal would have aroused no suspicion, as knowing the intention with which he acted. Whereupon Paul rebukes and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the people may more readily come over." The theory is, of course, contrary to the plain sense of the record, and Luther's comment is to the point: "There is none but Paul that hath his eyes open and sees the offence of Peter, of Barnabas and the other Jews. . . . On the other side they rather think that they do well in bearing with the infirmity of the weaker Jews."

What was Peter's side of the case? *Certain emissaries came from James*, the brother of the Lord. What messages they conveyed it is not recorded, but we know the situation which they represented. The Christian tradition was fluid; there were currents and undercurrents, eddies and whirlpools. Christian Jews who were "Jewish Christians," Pharisees who were believers, and believers who were Pharisees: all of which we have noted. And now come the Jerusalem emissaries with the latest reports and apostolic annotations and afterthoughts. It appeared that the unity of the Judæan Church might be ruptured if there were this open fraternizing with the uncircumcised. The conscience of the stricter brethren would certainly be scandalized, and this was a time not for haste but for caution. Therefore let Brother Peter, if necessary and for the ultimate good of all, risk a minor controversy in Antioch rather than, by avoiding

it, provoke a more serious controversy and cleavage in Jerusalem.

So the Church of God is continually in difficulties and in danger. She is not only the Church militant but also the Church casuistical! She has to consider not only the divine Cause but also the actual and human *cases* that arise. She has to contend not only with the evil in the world but with her own infirmities also. And have not the weak indeed to be considered? It is possible to possess the Gospel without possessing the full truth of the Gospel (Luther); must not those, therefore, who have the Faith without holding by its fuller implications be received and cherished? It can hardly be right to break and fling away the crutches of an old tradition when there are so many who cannot walk without them! Again there may be a *conflict* of infirmities! On the one side there may be the weak who lean upon the old tradition, and on the other the weak upon whom the tradition rests as a burden and a bondage! And withal are the churches of Christ so entirely "not of this world" that they are unmoved by regional loyalties, regional prejudices, and regional limitations? Are the churches of Christ that are in Judæa to be expected to be so like-minded in all things with the churches of Christ that are in Syria, in Cilicia, in Galatia, in Corinth, that they will always believe the same thing and react harmoniously to the same situation?

These are questions that Apostles must face and answer! For Apostles are not pedagogues but shepherds; they must serve the Truth not in the pride of Truth but in the wisdom and humility of love. Therefore, what is right for an Apostle to the Uncircumcision may be wrong for an Apostle to the Circumcision!—"What is right"! How difficult it is to know what is right when rightness is a thing of constantly changing relations!

Nevertheless Peter *was to be condemned*. How much easier if we could dismiss even the possibility of such a

conclusion! How much easier if the Church could escape from this continual conflict by declaring that Peter in his Apostleship and Primacy is always right! Then indeed we should have order, hierarchy, discipline, uniformity! Then indeed faith would lie in submission to the Church's authority and goodness in submission to her definitive rule! Thus emerges once more the alluring myth of the Church Infallible.

"Supposing then it to be the Will of the Creator to interfere in human affairs, and to make provisions for retaining in the world a knowledge of Himself, so definite and distinct as to be proof against the energy of human scepticism, in such a case . . . there is nothing to surprise the mind, if He should think fit to introduce a power into the world, invested with the prerogative of infallibility in religious matters. Such a provision would be a direct, immediate, active, and prompt means of withstanding the difficulty. . . . This power, viewed in its fulness, is as tremendous as the giant evil which has called for it. . . . It claims, moreover, to have a hold upon statements not directly religious, so far as this, to determine whether they indirectly relate to religion, and, according to its own definitive judgment, to pronounce whether or not, in a particular case, they are consistent with revealed truth. . . . It claims to impose silence at will on any matters or controversies, of doctrine, which, on its own *ipse dixit*, it pronounces to be dangerous, or inexpedient, or inopportune."—*Newman*.¹

But a Church so totalitarian must have a care to include GOD within her totality! And what if *He* stand out of the agreement, and the all-important Signature be lacking? What if the chain of the Church's apostolical infallibility snap at the first link?

I said to Peter before them all, If you, a Jew born and bred, live Gentile-wise and not Jewishly, why do you seek to influence, yea constrain, the Gentiles to live like Jews? If you

¹ "Apologia pro Vita Sua."

have exercised a Christian liberty to hold fellowship with the uncircumcised, as no strict Jew would have done, why do you now change your course and withdraw from our Gentile Christian love-feasts? Why do you now side with those who would deny our Gentile converts the liberty to live as Gentiles, but would oblige them to submit to circumcision and live after the manner of Jews? For indeed that there should be Jewish brethren who have a conscience in this matter of circumcision we can well understand, and against this we protest not. But they would impose their conscience upon our Gentile congregations! They would have the whole Church conform to their mind and would make their own darkness our enlightenment! Against this we do most vehemently protest. Most of all we protest against your own action in lending countenance to their claims! Yes, even Peter is fallible. Even Peter must be judged by—the Gospel!

The Cruciality of the Gospel

Peter's action, then, was due to his fear of the defection of the Jewish Christians and his desire to keep the peace and maintain Church unity in Judæa. Paul is here concerned, primarily, neither about peace nor union, controversy nor schism, but about the Gospel itself. If *that* be compromised or corrupted, then what is left to contend for or unite upon? So ecclesiastical politics, even Apostolic politics, become blameworthy when they tamper with the Gospel—when they exalt religion over Christ. No matter whether the pressure come from “the Pharisees which believe” or from the Sadducees, or from whatsoever quarter, it must be resisted. The context of the Pharisees is Moses, the Prophets, the Meeting House, the Nation; the context of the Sadducees is Aaron, the Hierarchy, the Temple, the State: but from whatever quarter comes the pressure which tends to depress the Gospel to the level of some ulterior

consideration, either of State or Race or Religion, and thus to deny the cruciality of the Cross of Christ, it must be resisted.

Yet how subtly this pressure may be exerted! It may be done in the name of "Peace" and "Unity," or in the name of separation and fidelity to the ordinances of God—in the name therefore of "the whole Bible" and a "strict obedience." It is possible "to commit idolatry even with God's own appointments" by "moving them from the place and end where by God they were appointed"; "and the more a man, crying 'Christ, order, the rule, the command,' stands upon his points to justify himself and to condemn his brethren, the more danger is he in of being overcome of divers evils" (Bunyan).

So the tension is always present and the warfare of the Gospel is continuous. "Whoso can rightly judge between the Law and the Gospel, let him thank God and know that he is a right divine. In the time of temptation I confess that I myself do not know how to do it as I ought" (Luther). All human "religion"—laws, ordinances, tradition—used as a means of giving man a standing with God, comes under the judgment of the Cross of Christ. This is the Pauline protest. Circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision nothing (v. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 19): as self-justifying attitudes both alike come under the condemnation of grace and are dissolved. Faith alone is everything—because it is nothing: the open eye that beholds, not itself, but Christ, the empty hand that clasps, not itself, but the free gift of God.

And now the great Thesis is to be nailed up, to be known and read of all men; now, having broken through the shell, we come to the kernel.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

II. 15, 16

We, Jews by birth, as we are, and not "Gentile sinners," and yet knowing, as we do, that a man is not justified (made righteous) by the works of the Law, but through faith in Jesus Christ—even we ourselves also have believed—have become believers—in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not, I say, by works of the Law. For the saying stands, "By works of the Law no living man shall be justified."

Yes, so far as blood and *birth* and upbringing are concerned, *we* may be *Jews* by nature, and not "*Gentile sinners*" and infidels! And there was a time when we thought that that sufficed for our justification (Rom. ii. 17–20). We gloried in our race and our blood-religion; we rested in our Law and boasted—of God! We were the people who knew all about His purposes and were expert in the true faith. We were the guides of the blind, the righteous in an unrighteous world, the spiritual lords of the earth. This was our confidence; and truly our advantages were many. But what have we found? We have found that it is not by these things that a man is *made right with God*! We have found that it is not in his ancestry, his race, his orthodoxy, that a man obtains a standing with the Judge of all the earth. Nay, these things may even rise up to condemn him! Yes, we have found even *that*. Or rather *that* has found us—us who have become believers in Jesus Christ. The mask has been torn off and we have been revealed to ourselves as sinners like the Gentiles. That was the first lesson which we learned when we beheld Jesus Christ and His Cross through the eyes of faith.

For it was in the name of our own race, our own Law, our own religion that He was rejected and crucified; it was *we* who delivered Him up. The awful condemnation of having

condemned the Son of God rests upon us, and upon us *as religious men*. With God's name upon our lips and the Law for a frontlet between our eyes we condemned Him, and thought we did God service. That was the final issue of all our Law-work; our very righteousness has become manifestly a guilty thing, stained with the blood of the Son of God. How then, as religious men, can we be *justified by the works of the Law*? Our works, instead of justifying us, accuse us: we are under the judgment of the Cross.

And whither therefore do we turn for justification? To the Cross which condemns us! It was on the Cross that our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins (i. 4). It was on the Cross to which we had condemned Him that He made an end of our self-righteousness and brought to us the holy, forgiving, atoning righteousness of God. Dying that death, He awakens us to what He is, and in that awakening for the first time we are our true selves. We have been made right with God not by reason of what we are and what we have done, but by reason of what God is and what He has done; because He has redeemed us, borne our sins and reconciled us to Himself. We have no other standing, none; but we have this, for He Himself has provided it. This is the Lord's doing; this is the Gospel of God; and it is marvellous in our eyes.

What then remains for us but to believe God? What remains for us but to believe the record which He has given us in His Son? What remains for us but to believe *this* God Who *thus* condemns us *and* acquits us, Who strips us of all the armour wherein we trusted—and arms us with the breastplate of His own righteousness, the sword of His own Spirit which is His Word and Gospel? To attempt to add to this word and work of God; to attempt to make it more acceptable or secure by some word or work of our own—this were the last impiety. Therefore we add nothing; we *believe*—God! Yes, Jews and religious men as we are, we

stand on the same level as the uncircumcised Gentiles; we stand where all the world stands—guilty before God; and with them we seek a common salvation—to *be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law*. Yes, *we have believed in Christ Jesus* that we might be justified by faith in Him as the Yea and Amen of God.

Well, that is the Gospel! That is the Gospel of which we are Apostles, and which Barnabas and I were ordained to carry to the nations.

THE PARADOX OF FAITH

II. 17-21

But if, seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is Christ then an agent (the means or minister—lit. deacon) of sin? Perish the thought! For if what I demolish, those very things I build up again, it is I who constitute myself a transgressor! For I, through the Law, died to the Law—that I might live to God! I have been crucified with Christ—yet I live! But I am no longer I, but Christ lives in me! For that life which I now live in the body, I live in faith—faith in (“of”) the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not spurn—“cast away” (Wyclif), “despise” (Tyndale), “abrogate” (Geneva), “annul” (Moffatt)—the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through Law, then Christ died for nothing.

Verily I am not unmindful of what our Circumcisionist critics say. They say that if our preaching and practice is true, then it means that the ministry of Christ becomes a ministry in opposition to the Law of Moses and of God, and therefore a ministry of sin! Yes (they say), all our seeking after justification *in Christ*, without the works of the Law, amounts to this—that we *are found sinners*, ranked with the uncircumcised and unclean. So that, by our preaching and practice *Christ Himself* becomes *an agent*, a minister, of

sin! Perish the thought! Truly they who argue thus show themselves still in bondage to the letter! Sin for them means non-observance of the law of ordinances, just as righteousness means the observance of the outward ceremonies which the law enjoins. They have yet to understand the spirit of the Law; they have yet to perceive its real purpose and how it points beyond itself to the Gospel of Grace! But that cannot be true of our brother Peter and of those who are with him! Nay verily, our brother Peter's eyes have been opened! He has not forgotten Joppa and Cæsarea nor the stand that he took with us at Jerusalem! He has not forgotten how he himself, in the spirit of the Gospel, and in spite of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, tore down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. Well then, *if what I demolish, those very things I build up again, it is I who constitute myself a transgressor!* Either I was wrong in the tearing down or I am wrong in the building up again! Which is it?

Well then, as for myself, I tell you plainly I cannot go back. I am done with the religion of Law-work: I am dead to all that. The Law itself killed me! Yes, *I, through the Law, died to the Law.* The Law itself showed me my sinfulness, my mortal disability—and its own disability. The Law itself showed me how all human and religious possibilities pass over into tragic impossibility. The Law itself showed me that it could not make me right with God. The Law was righteous but I was sinful, and in my sin I was making the Law and all its ordinances minister to my own destruction. Yes, the Law itself became to me a minister of sin—and death! All this was made plain to me when once I had seen the law and my own heart in the light of the Cross of Christ. I saw that in the name of my religion I had persecuted the Lord's Anointed, rejected His Word, ranged myself with His crucifiers and shared their guilt. That was what it all came to; circumcision, purification,

fasts, feasts, sacrifices, holy days—that was what it came to: the murder of the Son of God.

And now *I* who crucified Christ *have been crucified with Christ!* I looked on Him Whom I pierced, and was pierced myself. To see myself the crucifier of the Son of God—that was my own crucifixion. I have died to the old life, to myself, to the Law, to the world—to everything. For what was left of me and my world that was not brought under the judgment of the Cross of Christ? To what could I go back and find it the same? When once I had seen the Christ of God crucified by the Powers of the world, yea, and by the Powers of the Church, to what could I return and find in it rest of soul and justification of life? What was Circumcision now? What were the broad phylacteries and salutations and chief seats in the synagogue now? What heart had I to build up again my broken world?

Then I saw that to bring me to this pass, to this death, was the very meaning and mission of the Law! It was no blind catastrophe; it was so ordered; God was in it all. I through the Law died to the Law—that *I might live to God*. Yes, I have been crucified with Christ—nevertheless *I live!* Yet it is *not I, but Christ lives in me!* The centre of my life is no longer myself; the centre is Christ, Who, in His holy otherness, His immeasurable aboveness, is nearer than all nearness—Who is in me as I cannot be “in” myself. Truly I claim no present perfection! I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I am still in straits and difficulties, wounded and buffeted and burdened. But the life *I now live in the body I live in faith*—faith not in myself nor my own “experience” but in Him Who is all that I am not—in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

What else is left for me to do? I am shut up to it. For how should I *spurn* this amazing *grace of God*? Or what sorcery should so bewitch me that I should cease to see this

grace for what it is, and should treat it as an added thing, one thing among others, something that gives to religion and life an extra adornment or enrichment? No, it is everything or nothing! For if Grace is something superimposed upon the *righteousness that comes through Law*, if, after all, salvation is by ordinances and sacraments and works of piety, or if it come biologically through purity of race, or if in any way through its own wisdom and moral energy the world can attain to self-justifying perfection—then *Christ died for nothing*. For verily if our righteousness stands in the ordinances of the Law, His death can have significance only as far as it witnesses to *that*, only as far as it summons us anew to realize our own religious possibilities as Jews: and *that* was not the confession which He witnessed before Pontius Pilate! He died to no purpose if He did not give Himself up for us, for Jew and Gentile alike, to do for us, and upon us, what the Law could not do and what the wisdom and righteousness of men could never achieve.

Where then do we stand?

We who profess a concern for "the future of religion" cannot come thus far in our study of this epistle without being halted by the inescapable interrogation: How is it with us? Is this, in any recognizable sense, still our Gospel, or have we been forced by the irresistible pressure of time and change to shift our *view-point* and therefore our *stand-point*? "Can we trust St. Paul" as anything other than "a great modernist of the early days," "an intellectualist with a passion for righteousness," "the first of the *intelligentsia*"? (Bethune Baker). Have we not to make terms with the modern mind, which cares little about sin, less about "metaphysical dogma," and nothing about "justification"? "The unofficial sentiments . . . of the average devout Christian to-day are presumably somewhat as follows: 'I

believe in God and try to live like Jesus, but I do not know exactly what the relation between them is, nor do I very much care'" (C. E. M. Joad). "In place of the Rock of Ages we have an immanent activity" (Bethune Baker). And is it not enough? Has Christianity ever been a fixed magnitude isolated from "the epigenetic process"? Must not we of the new world and the new knowledge continually re-think our Faith in relation to (and if possible in harmony with!) a constantly changing environment—intellectual, moral, political? Must we not discard the obsolescences of a traditional orthodoxy and seek to present a Gospel that has a contemporary answer to contemporary problems?

Now let it be admitted—let us insist—that there must be room for re-adaptations and re-valuations. Regarded as a system of belief the Christian Faith is never a fixed and final thing: for as man's knowledge of the universe and his apprehension of the Ground of the universe are subject to enlargement or contraction, and always to change, so his systematized beliefs must change also. In this sense there has been, not one Christianity, but a succession of Christianities. Doubtless also the man Paul—and the Man Jesus—regarded as historical figures, are properly subjects of historical examination and re-valuation. They have their own setting and background, intellectual, moral, psychological; and round them has grown a body of literature, the New Testament, also subject to historical and literary criticism. But the question forced upon us here looks beyond these considerations to something more fundamental.

Is there, within and beneath and beyond all these necessary re-statements and re-valuations, a Gospel of God in which we see Paul in his Apostleship, Christ in His Mediatorship, the world in its sin and sorrow, and God in His redeeming grace? Beyond all questions of time and change, of historical criticism, *Formgeschichte*, and psychological analysis, shall we not listen *for*, if not *to*, this Word of God? And what if

this Word of God to fallen man be itself, in the first place, not a set of oracular and convenient solutions to man's varied problems but a probing into the deeper problem of whose very existence man is willingly ignorant? "*And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God. . . . And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, WHERE ART THOU?*" (Gen. iii. 8, 9). Bethink thee, thou art not—where thou oughtest to be! Thou art not—with Me! Consider then *where* thou art and *why* thou art there! Thou hast many "problems," and from henceforth they shall multiply about thee; thou shalt be an utterer of many questions; but answer first this question which I put to thee: *Where art thou?* "*And he said, I heard Thy Voice in the garden, and I was afraid.*" Behold Thy servant as a religious man, now aware of his religious consciousness!—"I was afraid because I was naked: and I hid myself."

So the original immediacy of communion between Man and God is broken, and religion is born of a sense of loss, of shame, of nakedness, and the need for—justification. Is not this the human fact, overlaid, thrust down, and gathering round itself a complexus of fears, inhibitions, evasions? Man has gone into hiding—until he can devise his own self-justification. His religion, or anti-religion, becomes an evasion, a *concealed* evasion, a hiding and a seeking, a seeking and a hiding, a beating about the bush in quest, and in avoidance, of the Fire of the Presence; a busy weaving of fig-leaves, and a fear that the coverings only accentuate the shame; and withal a hoping at last to stand forth clothed and unashamed, at last to appear presentable and unprovable and—self-justified.

It is to this condition that, according to Paul, the Gospel speaks. It is God Himself Who, out of His own nature, provides man's justification. His *justification*, we say, and not simply his pardon: for the Gospel is not merely the word of a romantic, divine forgiveness, the "everlasting mercy"

of God, but the proclamation of God's forgiving righteousness, His righteous forgiveness; the forgiveness that means the *remission* of sin through an eternal atonement. "I had a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly" (Spurgeon). *That* too has been felt, and will be felt again: and the Pauline Gospel is, that God is both just *and* the justifier of the ungodly (Rom. iii. 26; iv. 5). This is the righteousness of God, the Crisis of the Cross of Christ. In Christ the world is both judged and justified, condemned and cleared. "At midnight, when there is no light, and at midday, when there is no shadow, the distinction between light and shade ceases to have meaning. Christ is both midnight and midday. Then is perceived above all human distinctions the vast comprehensiveness of God" (Barth). Adam has no need to hide *from* God; he may hide *in* God. "The new life is life in the Divine indicative instead of the imperative, in dependence upon God, not in search for God. . . . No longer—as it was previously—is he [man] himself the centre of the picture, but God. This means that, at last, he has become what he sought in vain to become along the legalistic path—in vain because it is incompatible with legalism—namely, free from himself, free from self-seeking. Before he does anything he is already in God" (Brunner).¹

To the world indeed such a Gospel is irrelevant—"hidden" (2 Cor. iv. 3)—because the god of this world has "blinded the eyes of them that believe not." And the god of this world has many *personae*. He is Money Power, Big Business, the divine State, the dominant Race, the Proletariat, the "Revolution," all regarded as ends in themselves. Thus the worship of the god of this world in any one of his *personae* generates some form of antinomianism. The devotee is beyond sin; whatever he does for the Cause is justified. The cause has absolute rights and there is no appeal to a higher sovereignty.

¹ "The Divine Imperative": pp. 77-8.

The god of this world may indeed one day produce a totalitarian World Plan for the complete integration of all human life on this planet. Is not the vital principle of the natural man the conquest of all things for his own use and glory? What if the religion of the spirit, the religion of conscience, reverence, humility, eternity, is after all an accident of history that must give way before the imperious egoism and realism of Man, conscious at last of his self-sufficiency? What if Babel at last assert itself over Zion?

"The logical end of the 'integral realism' professed by humanity to-day is the organized slaughter of nations or classes. It is possible to conceive of an alternative realism . . . which would be their reconciliation. The thing to possess would be the whole earth, and they would finally come to realize that the only way to exploit it properly is by union, while the desire to set themselves up as distinct from others would be transferred from the nation to the species, arrogantly drawn up against everything which is not itself. . . . Thereafter humanity would be unified in one immense army, one immense factory . . . would long cease to situate the good outside the real world, would have no God but itself and its desires, and would . . . attain to a really grandiose control . . . a really joyous consciousness of its power and grandeur. And History will smile to think that this is the species for which Socrates and Jesus Christ died."—*Julien Benda*.¹

In such a world (and as a mental world it exists to-day) any gospel of grace, of redemption, of forgiveness and justification must be regarded as an absurd and pernicious irrelevancy. But indeed this must be thrust home. The "irrelevancy" of the Cross of Christ is precisely the indictment which the Cross brings against the world, and in the inevitable recurrent crises of disillusion and despair this "irrelevancy" becomes tragically relevant.

"Both the body and the mind of [pagan] Rome had been exhausted by the impossible task of a single city ruling an

¹ "The Great Betrayal": pp. 161-2.

entire world. And then a terrible thing happened. A whole people grew tired of life. . . . They had come to own all the country houses, all the town houses, all the yachts, and all the stage-coaches they could ever hope to use. They found themselves possessed of all the slaves in the world. They had eaten everything, they had seen everything, they had heard everything. . . . As a result, all food and drink had lost its taste, all books had grown dull, and existence itself had developed into a burden which a good many people were willing to drop at the first respectable opportunity.”—*H. W. Van Loon*.¹

It should be noted lastly that for a large section of the religious world, also, this Gospel must appear irrelevant. It would be difficult to quarrel with Dr. Edwyn Bevan's dictum in his Gifford Lectures that the real division in the religious beliefs of mankind is not between the Western and Oriental, or Aryan and Semitic, groups, as such, but between those religions which affirm “the essential infinite unannulable difference” between God and man, and those which affirm man's fundamental identity with God. To all religions for which God is simply an immanent activity within the universe any gospel of grace is repugnant. It is not reconciliation, atonement, redemption that man needs, for his sense of separation from God is illusory and sin itself partakes of the illusion. What man needs is to penetrate the illusion and recognize his own divinity as part of the totality of all being. Thus man's proper attitude to God is not that of penitence, confession and adoration but an inward-sinking contemplation which engages and possesses God in the *arcanum* of man's own being.

Here too, then, the Pauline Gospel forces the question, Where do we stand? Beneath the contradiction set up between the Hindu-Monistic conception of God and the Hebraic-Christian conception there may indeed exist some all-reconciling truth, but it is hardly there for mortal man to

¹ “The Liberation of Mankind,” British edn. 1933, p. 49.

discover it. For us it remains a choice between incompatible alternatives.

"In such a case the judgment of value is so fundamental that it is impossible to prove its rightness by any deducing of it from value-judgments still more fundamental or more generally recognized: a man's choice is the expression of his own personal reaction, of which he can only say: 'I have a conviction that this is right,' just as he can only say, in justification of his thinking something beautiful, 'I see it so.' . . . A man's self-abasement before a goodness, a holiness, a wisdom, a beauty infinitely above him and yet stooping down to him in a strange love, so far as it is genuine, must give a particular kind of note to his life and personality. The life and personality of another man, whose view of the universe leaves no place for such self-abasement before anything higher than himself, higher, at any rate, than his own best self, will have a difference in it which those associating with both will probably be able to feel."—*Edwyn Bevan*.¹

But here the Pauline witness is not directed against a mystical Monism in any of its forms, but against the elevation of a religion of Law in an effort to overcome, as it were, the holy transcendence of God by human meritorious effort. Here too, when Merit, with its implication of the moral adequacy and competence of Man, is opposed to Grace, religion is corrupted into a deluding sorcery. Wherefore, "O senseless Gauls, who has bewitched you?"

Chapter Five

FAITH AND THE SPIRIT

III. 1-5

O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you—who has cast a spell upon you? by what evil eye have your own eyes been fascinated and drawn away?—that you should not obey the truth—you among whom, and before whose very

¹ "Symbolism and Belief": pp, 79, 80.

eyes, Jesus Christ was set forth—was posted up as plain as any proclamation upon your walls!—crucified? [“Exiled and crucified” (Wyclif); “proscribed and crucified” (Rheims).] This one thing I want to know of you: Did you receive the Spirit on account of your works of obedience to the (Jewish) Law, or by the “hearing” of faith—by hearing the Gospel and believing it? Are you so senseless that having begun in the Spirit, you are now going to attain perfection, forsooth, through the flesh—through outward rites and ceremonies? Did you suffer so much persecution for nothing—if indeed it is for nothing? He then Who so bountifully supplies you with His Spirit and works among you His mighty works—does He do so on account of your own works of ceremonial obedience to the Law, or on account of the “hearing” of faith—because you have heard and believed the Gospel?

O senseless Galatians, what ails you? What sorcery is this that has bewitched you that you should no longer obey the truth? I am not accusing you of wilful apostasy; but why this strange infatuation? How is it that you have swerved so soon from the simplicity of the Gospel—you of all people, before whose very eyes Jesus Christ was set forth—crucified? Yes, I myself can testify to that! You know how I preached the Gospel to you at the first (iv. 13): “There is no painter who with his colours can so lively set out Christ unto you as I have painted Him by my preaching” (Luther). And still more was He set forth in your baptism, and is continually being set forth in the breaking of the bread and the outpouring of the wine of the holy feast. And you believed! The call to spiritual freedom came to you (v. 13), and you obeyed it. The old spirit of bondage and fear was exchanged for the spirit of a childlike faith in God—for the very Spirit of God Himself. By faith you lived as justified men and women; by faith you had peace with God; not the peace that rests upon human feeling, upon self-approval, but the peace that rests upon the promises of God in Christ; through

Whom also you had access—by faith!—into God's abounding grace, in which you stood, and—by faith!—exulted in the hope of His glory! (Rom. v.). Truly you were still mortal men. Truly the necessity for faith was not for one instant relaxed. Truly you were still in the flesh and knew the bitter warfare waged in your own body between flesh and spirit, between sense and faith, between the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God! But that very conflict witnessed to the new life—witnessed to the Spirit.

Now *this one thing I want to know of you—Did you receive the Spirit* by reason of your obedience to the ordinances and ceremonies of the Jewish Law—by submitting to circumcision, by observing the Jewish feasts and fasts—*or by the simple "hearing" of faith*—by listening to the Gospel and believing it? You know quite well that it was by the "hearing" of faith! Well then, can you be *so senseless* as to suppose *that having begun in the Spirit you are now going to perfect yourselves through the flesh*? Are you going to reverse the Divine order? (Lightfoot). Are you proposing to "progress" from substance to shadow, from spirit to letter, from liberty to bondage? After beginning with the new universal life of the Spirit are you going to "advance" to a narrow national religion of outward rules and ceremonies? *Did you suffer so much all for nothing*? All the losses and crosses which you endured for the sake of your Gospel faith, all the hostility stirred up against me, and against you for standing by me, by the local synagogues of the Jews—did you suffer it to no purpose? Come! I put it to you again—*He Who so bountifully supplies you with His Spirit and works among you His mighty works*, does He do so because of your being circumcised, or intending to be circumcised? Does He do so because you are now planning to observe Jewish sabbaths and holy seasons, *or because the Gospel has had a hearing among you, and that hearing has been unto faith*?

The Nihilism of Grace

Once more, then, we are made to face the crisis of the Cross. For the Pauline argument is still relevant. Cannot Christianity itself, with its codes and conventions and traditions, become for us a sort of magnified Judaism? Has it not often hardened into a legalistic Faith, a religion of outward forms and observances? Has it not become a nationalized or Westernized institution, identified with a particular culture? Is not the Pharisee—and the Sadducee!—with us still? The zeal for some kind of self-righteousness, for self-justification, for a separatism that ministers to our sense of superiority, for a mechanized religion that forsakes the Spirit for the outward form—this is still known among us. “Most men like to be told what to think and what to say; that is why the Church and the Army have always been the two most popular institutions” (Joad).

It is at this point, then, according to Paul, that we have to face the crucial judgment of the Word of God. Jew and Gentile, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, the Church and the World—all alike as belonging to the sphere of men, are under condemnation. There is no institutional salvation; no “saving Church” as such; no ecclesiastical righteousness that is not also unrighteousness; no justification by race-purity or patriotism, or devotion to some ideological law. There is neither Christian nor Buddhist, Mohammedan nor Brahmin, Fascist nor Communist, but only a sinful world, judged, condemned, and redeemed by the God Who justifieth the ungodly. This is the awful nihilism of Grace; and out of it, as life springing out of death, rises the Church of the Resurrection. We must believe God or die in our sins.

And the argument closes on the appeal to the witness of the Spirit. “I simply want to ask you one thing. Was it through ceremonial observances, through prescribed works

of piety, that you received the Spirit, or was it through simple faith in the Gospel of God?" This, the Pauline test, was the Petrine test also (Acts x. 47), and the mind of the Jerusalem Council (Acts xv. 8, 9). Verily the Kingdom of Heaven is opened to all believers, and to this the Spirit beareth witness!

What then is this *gift of the Spirit*? It is *not*, whatever it is, man's own "religious consciousness"; *not* "the religious spirit"; *not* man's own mystical witness to "spiritual reality." It is the Spirit that is *not* of man but of God. It is God's own witness to Himself as the God of all grace Who has dealt redeemingly with the world through Christ. It is the Spirit of God that accompanies the truth of God in the Gospel, creating in man the faith that receives it. The gift of the Spirit is thus indistinguishable from faith itself, even the faith which truly receives the Gospel and confides in and magnifies God.

Therefore, ye Galatians who have now conceived so strange a concern to make your calling and election sure by becoming Jewish Churchmen and "children of Abraham" (through circumcision!)—ye who are now all for putting yourselves under Jewish racial ordinances in order to find religious security in an exclusive Church—therefore know this: That the true "children of Abraham" are the children, not of the Law, nor of the race, but of *faith*!

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

III. 6-9

Even as it is written "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6), so you see it is those who are of faith, those who believe, who are Abraham's true sons!—who are in the true line of spiritual descent. Thus, foreseeing that God justifies the nations by faith, the Scripture proclaimed the Gospel beforehand to

Abraham, saying, "in thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3). So it is those who are of faith who are blessed with the believing Abraham.

You Galatians have been bewitched by racial gossellers whose gospel is—not a gospel. But they are telling you that you must be adopted into the family of Abraham, and receive the sign of circumcision, and keep the Jewish Law; then you will be children of the Covenant and rightful heirs of salvation. Well, that is a "gospel" of men, and among men it may make a fair show; so that if you are concerned to justify yourselves in the eyes of the Jewish authorities you do well to give heed to it. Nevertheless the question is not how we shall be justified before men, but how we shall be justified before God: which is a far different matter. However, let us consider the case. You who would be religious with a religion that sets you on a platform of holiness above the rest of mankind, you who would be "sons of Abraham," members of the true Church of the Circumcision, and sole heirs of the messianic promises, consider now what the Scriptures have to teach us concerning our Father Abraham.

Truly he was a religious man, a man to mark for ever. Truly we behold him against the sky-line of our Jewish history, a man of heroic stature, a religious man and a man of exploits, mighty in good works. And God Himself counted him righteous! But why? Because he observed the Law? Nay, for the Law was not then given! Because then he observed it by prophetic anticipation (Baruch lvii.2) and kept the unwritten law of the Most High? Verily if that had been so he had cause for boasting: but has any man ever had cause for boasting before God? No. He was justified because he *believed God*! For so the Scripture has it: "*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned—imputed—to him for righteousness.*" So all that Abraham ever was, all that he ever did, all his own works of merit, melt and

evaporate and are altogether dissolved in this one word! Nay, is not here "the very action which made him what he was" (Barth)?

Yet it is not so much *his* action, for faith then were a work of merit, "the queen of virtues, the confession of piety" (Philo), but the action of God upon him and in him! For truly it was the Word of God that came to him and said, "*Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and they exceeding great reward*"; the Word of God brought him forth under the host of heaven and said, "*Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: for so shall thy seed be*"; even the same Word of God which had already declared to him in Haran, "*I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall all nations be blessed.*" So Abraham's faith came by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God! Yes, and this Word of God was the Word of the Gospel itself! For, *foreseeing that God justifies the nations by faith, the Scripture proclaimed the Gospel beforehand to Abraham.* And what was left for Abraham to do? There, under the stars, stripped of all the show of things that pass among men, stripped of all merit, all the righteousness of men—there in nakedness of soul he stands in the presence of the Word of God! What is left for him to do but *believe*—believe in Him "Who makes the dead live and calleth the things that are not as though they were"? What is left for him to do but cast himself upon God and the Word of His grace? So Abraham believed God! And *that*, precisely *that*, God counted to him for righteousness! Here was God's valuation, God's affirmation, God's Yea and Amen, from which all human boasting was forever excluded. Abraham was justified by faith and thus lifted into a new life of personal relationship with God. And this new life was not one of individual isolation, it was a corporate life in which Abraham and all his true descendants shared. So now you see it is those who are of faith who are Abraham's true

descendants, his spiritual *sons*. All who live by faith in the Gospel of God, and only they, *are blessed with the believing Abraham*. Therefore, since the appeal is to Abraham, and your new teachers would make much of it, go to school to him, all of you, and he will teach you, not the Law but the Gospel!

But how is it with you, my children? You would mix Law and Gospel, merit and grace, together. You would be Christians according to Christ and "Jews" according to Moses—and Abraham! You are going to make your salvation sure by getting yourselves confirmed into the Church of the Circumcision. You are going to be—religious! You are going to weave a meritorious righteousness of your own, helped out by divine grace! Very well. Then let me warn you.

THE LAW AND FAITH

III 10-14

For as many as are of works of Law—as many as rely upon "Law-work"—are under a curse. For so it has been written in the Scriptures (Deut. xxvii. 26)—"Cursed is every one who does not continue—does not abide obediently—in everything that is written in the Book of the Law to practise it." But that in Law—through relying upon a legal obedience—no one is justified with God is evident: for it is written (Habak. ii 4) "The just shall live by faith" (by his faithfulness, which is grounded in his faith); but the Law is not of faith; that is not its basis; instead it speaks in this way (Lev. xviii. 5): "The man who practises these things shall live by them." But now Christ has ransomed us from the Law's curse—from this curse pronounced by the Law upon all transgressors—having become a curse for us: for so it has been written (Deut. xxi. 23): "Cursed is every one who hangs on a gallows-tree" (Every one whom the Law condemns to the gibbet is

under the Law's anathema, and must be so regarded.) Yes, this was *in order that in Christ Jesus Abraham's blessing might come to the nations, that thus by faith we, Jew and Gentile alike, may receive the promised Spirit.*

Understand that if you would put yourself under the Jewish Law, and subscribe to a religion of Law, and obtain a standing through *works of Law*, you must do so not on your own terms but on the terms which the Law itself dictates. And I—who have good reason to know better than you do what this means—I tell you plainly that *as many as are of "works of Law,"* as many as commit themselves to a legalistic religion, *are under a curse.* They must always live under the accusation and condemnation of that righteous Law which they have set before them. For bethink you of this: Law would not be law nor Duty duty if they made terms with transgression. No; what the Law demands of you is that you should *"continue in everything that is written"* in its statutes. It demands a complete obedience, and the life of complete obedience is the only life which it can justify. The Law challenges the moral ability of men with the imperative of perfection. Well, you cannot meet that requirement! On this basis of keeping the Law *no one is justified with God,* every one is under condemnation. Plainly this is so, and we who are Jews know that it is so; as it is written in our Scriptures, *"The just, the righteous man, shall live, not by the works of the Law, but by faith."* It is his *faithfulness*, his *fidelity*, that God regards, and this springs from *faith* itself, from a steadfast belief in God Himself and His promises. Yes, but the Law itself knows nothing of this—nothing! For *the Law is not of faith.* That is not a principle which it recognizes nor a spirit which it shares: on the contrary, speaking of its own statutes, it says, *"The man who practises these things shall live by them."* "By them" shall he live, not "by faith"! You see, then, that the Law is a hard-and-fast system, complete in itself,

exacting a complete obedience, and visiting condemnation and punishment upon all disobedience. So whoever puts himself under the Law in the hope of being justified by the Law is in reality putting himself under a curse.

But then is not every man, and not the Jew only, in some sort under the Law (Rom. ii), that is, under the unwritten moral law of the heart? Yea verily, and all are under condemnation; all have fallen short! Every morally-awakened man lives under the condemnation of his own moral sense. But *Christ has ransomed us from the Law's curse*. That is the Gospel. It always was the Gospel! It lay behind the blessing of Abraham! Christ is the Christ of the ages, and the ransom is from eternity. This is the hidden wisdom ordained before the world, the mystery unguessed by the ages and generations, but now made manifest (1 Cor. ii. 7; Col. i. 26). God takes the curse of our sin upon Himself that, through His grace, we might take upon ourselves His blessing. Christ ransomed us from the Law's curse, *having become a curse for us*. From the princes of this world this truth is still hidden (1 Cor. ii. 8); it is still hidden from the sphere of human wisdom; but to faith it is made manifest in the Gospel, and to faith alone. In Christ the eternal has assumed the garments of time, the robe of history, but only faith penetrates the incognito, the faith that is taught by the Spirit of God. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed (1 Cor. xii. 3): but also no man can see that Jesus became accursed for us, except by the same Holy Spirit. But faith does see Christ Jesus accursed for us, hanging on the gallows of Golgotha: even as *it has been written* in the book of the Law, "*Cursed is every one who hangs, by sentence of the Law, on a gallows-tree.*" (Yes, that was written as if to expound the Cross!) And so indeed the Law must speak. Him whom the Law condemns to the gibbet as unworthy to live, the Law must necessarily pronounce accursed. And in the name of our Law, the Law not

only of Caesar but of Moses, Jesus was sent to the gibbet and became a curse—for us.

O ye Galatians, before whose very eyes Jesus Christ was thus set forth in my preaching—gibbeted, crucified!—this is the Gospel you have heard from the beginning, the Gospel not of Law but of Grace; and there is no other! God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 19): so that *in Christ Jesus Abraham's blessing might come to the nations that thus, by faith, we all may receive the promised Spirit*. There is no gospel but a world-gospel; a gospel of grace for all the nations of men. And there can be no response to it but to *believe God*, there in the awful *incognito* of the Cross, or—to disbelieve Him. But to *bargain* with Him, to bargain with Him *there*, to seek to barter piety for grace, circumcision for blessing; or to seek to *propitiate* Him, to propitiate Him *there*; to add this or the other work of legal merit to the atonement wrought by His own love—that were the final blasphemy! At the Cross nothing is left to us but to die the death that is—faith; and be raised to the newness of life that is—faith.

“The sophisters do spoil us of this knowledge of Christ and most heavenly comfort (namely, that Christ was made a curse that He might deliver us from the curse of the law) when they separate Him from sins and sinners and only let him out unto us as an example to be followed. By this means they make Christ not only unprofitable unto us, but also a Judge and a Tyrant who is angry with our sins and condemneth sinners. But we must as well wrap Christ, and know Him to be wrapped, in our sins, in our malediction, in our death, and in all our evils, as He is wrapped in our flesh and in our blood.”—*Luther*.

The Question

The recurrent question for us is, Can we still receive this? Is it for us also the Word of God? Are we here dealing with

divine truth or with Pauline excrescences which must be set aside in the interests of "the religion of the spirit"? "Perhaps in religion the age of the *symbol* is rapidly exhausting itself, and we may be approaching a solemn manifestation of the *idea* hidden in that symbol" (Mazzini). Perhaps it is time that we should seek a new religious synthesis rid of those redemptionist and old-world elements which now embarrass the modern mind. Are not such questionings and possibilities to be faced? Does not even Paul himself, unknown to himself, force them upon us? In his very protest against racial religionism does he not force us out toward new relationships, a new and perhaps eclectic religious bond?

But even so he still confronts us! Who is this Paul that he should insist that, before we pass on to consider any possible new relationships and syntheses, we must first understand that at the core of *all* our human relationships is that which opposes them and corrupts them—Sin? Who is this Paul who confronts us with the sin of man and the grace of God; this Paul who would show us that our very moralities and idealisms, our projections of the Divine itself, inhibit true goodness because they make our moral and religious selves the centre of the picture, and thus make our "righteousness" self-centred, man-centred and therefore unrighteous?

Yet we must hear Paul out: for he has so far by no means done with this matter of the Law. And here it is Rabbi Paul who speaks—Rabbi Paul meeting rabbinical Judaism with its own methods of argument.

"After this principal and invincible argument (iii. 1-14) Paul addeth another, grounded upon the similitude of a man's testament: which seemeth to be very weak, and such as the Apostle ought not to use for the confirmation of a matter of so great importance. For in high and weighty matters we ought to confirm earthly things by divine things, and not divine

and heavenly things by worldly things. And indeed it is true that these arguments of all other are most weak. . . . [Nevertheless] this is strong enough, so that we ground the same upon the ordinance of God."—*Luther*.

"The argument is here an *a fortiori* argument, as those of our Lord drawn from the affection of a human father and from the compliance of a human judge" (Lightfoot).

THE GOSPEL AS A DIVINE BEQUEST TO FAITH

III. 15-18.

I speak, brothers, by way of illustration, of the affairs of man—of what holds good in ordinary human judgments. When once even a man's will and testament is ratified, no one sets it aside or adds clauses to it. Now it was to Abraham and his offspring that the Promises were spoken (were made out). And mark! It is not said, "and to his offsprings" as of many, but, "and to thy offspring" as of one—which is Christ (Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 15). What I mean is this: The covenant—the Divine will and testament!—ratified beforehand by God, this covenant the Law—coming as it did four hundred and thirty years later—does not annul so as to make the promise invalid. For if the inheritance—the divine bequest—came by Law, then of course it is no longer by Promise! But it was by Promise (and not Law) that God freely bestowed it upon Abraham.

Let me take an illustration from worldly affairs. You know that *even a man's will*, when once it has been drawn up and sealed, is regarded as sacred and inviolable. *No one* cancels it or adds to it. How much more binding, then, this rule must be when applied to the Will of God! I am speaking now, of course, of the Abrahamic covenant, of which your new teachers have told you so much—and so little! Let us look at the precise wording of it as Moses records it. *And Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I*

give this land, and again, *To thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever*. Note that in passing! *It is not said*, “*And to thy offsprings*” (seeds) in the plural, but “*and to thy offspring*” (seed) in the singular. For in fact the reference points not to Abraham’s sons in general but to the one specific son and heir, Isaac (iv. 22, 23), who was a type of Christ and must here be understood to represent Christ, as Christ Himself represents all the children of the Promise who are the heirs of God in Him. A valid exposition, made to rest upon an altogether unnecessary and unjustifiable piece of rabbinical exegesis! “The Jews will not receive this interpretation of Paul: for they say that the singular number is here put for the plural, one for many” (Luther). Very justifiably!

What I mean is this. A covenant already ratified by God cannot be abrogated by the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later. No, the Will stands in its original terms! Law cannot cancel Promise! Perhaps you may object that the Law is God’s own codicil to the Will! but no, they are separate and distinct. Promise and Law stand apart: they move on different planes and function to different ends: so that what comes by Law cannot be of Promise, nor what comes by Promise be of Law. Yet your new teachers would have you believe that the Gospel inheritance, given by Promise to Abraham and realized in Christ Jesus, came through the Law and because of the Law! That is why they want you to be circumcised and observe the Jewish laws and ceremonies! But no; it was by Promise and not Law that God freely bestowed the inheritance upon Abraham.

The point then is this: That the Gospel blessing is in no way the result of the Jewish Law, for it existed before the Law, and the Law cannot annul it. The divine Possibility, which is Grace, is not to be reached or measured by the human possibility which is—religion! Not even religion in its most compelling and positive form, not even religion in the form of racial tradition, hero-worship, national pride,

with all its customs, emblems, ceremonies, and disciplines—not even such a religion can reach up to the Divine Possibility. On the other hand, there is a Gospel of God precisely because all human possibilities break down; because, by reason of sin, they all fall short of that “glory of God” which, whether we will or no, we must forever seek. The Gospel of God is His free, unmerited and sovereign love pledged to all nations in Christ, and this Gospel is to be received by faith. Yes, the point is: That the proper object of faith is neither religion nor law nor piety nor yet pardon or justification itself, but this same Gospel of God, this Will of God and Word of God, and therefore God Himself in His immutable Covenant.

But now a new question arises. Why was the Law given at all? What can be its function? What relation does it bear to the purpose of God and the life of man? That it has a definitive office Paul proceeds to show, at the same time showing its inferiority to grace.

“(1) Instead of justifying it condemns . . . it was added to reveal and multiply transgressions. (2) It was but temporary. . . . (3) It did not come direct from God to man. There was a double interposition, a twofold mediation between the Giver and the recipient. (4) It was of the nature of a contract, depending for its fulfilment on the observance of its conditions by the two contracting parties.”—*Lightfoot*.

“There is a double use of the law. One is civil. . . . Every law is given to restrain sin. If it restrain sin then it maketh men righteous? No, nothing less! . . . This restraint sheweth plainly enough that they which have need of the law are not righteous but rather wicked and mad men whom it is necessary by the bonds and prison of the law so to bridle that they sin not [outwardly]. . . . Another use of the law is divine and spiritual, which is (as Paul saith) to *increase transgressions*; that is to say, to reveal unto a man his sin, his blindness, his misery, his impiety, ignorance and contempt of God . . . to the end that God might bridle and beat down this monster and mad

beast (I mean the presumption of man's righteousness and religion).”—*Luther*.

THE LAW AS A PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL

III. 19-23

Why then was the Law given at all? It was added (“interpolated”—Moffatt) for the sake of transgressions, until the Offspring should come to Whom—on account of Whom—the Promise was made. Moreover it was ordained through angels (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Acts vii. 53; Heb. ii. 2), and by means (lit. “by hand”) of a mediator—Moses. But where there is no conditional contract as between two parties, but (as in the case of a will and testament) only one party is acting, no mediator exists; there is no mediator of one! But God is One, and in the covenant of grace He bestowed the Promise directly upon Abraham without mediation. So then the Law is in opposition to God’s Promises? Heaven forbid! But if a Law had been given which was able to give life—if it had regenerating power—then indeed righteousness would have been established by Law. But the Scripture has shut everything up—the whole world, all mankind, and all the affairs of mankind—under sin, so that the Promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those that believe—to those who exercise that faith. But before this faith came—before the Gospel was fully manifested—we were in custody, shut up to the faith about to be revealed.

Your new teachers are never tired of reminding you that the Law with all its ordinances was ordained by God. Perhaps they have also explained to you that it was *ordained*, as every Jew understands, *through angels* and *by means of a human mediator*, Moses, who in turn delivered it to the people. Moses—and the angels—stood as it were between God and the people: for mediatorship implies two parties who do not come together. But when the Gospel Promise was

given it was given by God directly to Abraham without any intermediaries. And, as I have said, the Promise was given first. The Law *was added* later; it was an inserted thing, an interlude. *Why* was it added at all? Because of sin. Sinful men needed the curb—and the provocation!—of the Law. They needed it in order to get to know their own nature and their own condition and their need of God's grace. Yes, the Law was given not simply to restrain sin but to expose it. For the effect of Law, matched with man's corrupt nature, is to inflame his wilfulness, so that he beats himself against its bars (Calvin). The Law is the ideal to which our conscience assents and against which our self-will rebels: thus it divides us against ourselves and becomes our accusation and our despair. Under the Law, under the religion of duty, God and Man are two parties that are never brought into immediate, unifying relationship.

So the dispensation of Law was an interlude *until the Offspring should come*, concerning Whom the Promise was made. Until, that is to say, in the fulness of time Christ should appear. *The Law then is against God's Promises?* Perish the thought! Truly the Law gives us the rule of righteousness. What it cannot do is *to give life*, to regenerate us and give us power to live up to that rule, and thus live *by* it. There the Law is powerless and *we* remain powerless likewise: there our human energy and aspiration beat against the bars in vain. Religion as the expression of man's aspiration is also the expression of his frustration and impotence—yes, and of the impotence of religion itself! For *if* any Law, any system of morality and piety, *had been given* which was able to quicken man's nature and regenerate it, then indeed the story would be different. But there is no such system. There is no ethical imperative in the world, no system of moral idealism, with power equal to its own demands; no religion of duty which, standing between the heavenly and the earthly, between God and man, is able of

itself to bring the two together into harmony. The mediation and ministry of Law is the mediation and ministry of judgment. So *the Scripture has shut up* the whole world of man *under sin*. Nevertheless we are prisoners of hope! We are in the custody of Law so that we may be delivered over to the Gospel—so that *the Promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*.

The Crisis

So again we are held to the point that the divine possibility which is grace cuts across the human possibility which is morality and religion! But can we in these days receive it? Can we receive any word that has for its pre-supposition the solidarity of mankind *in sin*, and that grounds its appeal upon man's total inadequacy? Can we even conceive of the Pauline total world-view in which all things are shut up under sin? For our modern totalitarianism prefers a more limited and sectarian totality: our modern "world-view" sees the world less as a world than as a congeries of factions—Communitic and Capitalistic, proletarian and bourgeois, "Aryan" and "non-Aryan." So too our modern conviction of sin, as we have said, is the conviction of the sin of the *other* class, the *other* race, the *other* ideology, over against our own sinlessness. And with what enthusiasm we proclaim our own invincible ideological adequacy! Verily it appears that "the Law" as the formulation of the racial or political possibility, the charter of national divinity, can both quicken and justify—and beatify!—its servitors! "Hitler gives that same happiness that Marx and Lenin give—the happiness of complete abandonment to clear certainty and absolute truth, to the indubitable assurance of final victory. . . . It is a happiness so great as to be almost unendurable, a happiness that shines in the face, that makes the body restless for action, that infuses immense resourcefulness and courage" (Voigt). Who is ready to believe that "it is also the happiness

which is, in the end, brought to nothingness"? "Through the war of 1914-18 humanity has been able to convince itself . . . that it is not degenerating after all: on the contrary, it is full of life, strength, bravery, enterprise. . . . After a few decades and centuries the new social order will look back on the October Revolution as the bourgeois order does on the German Reformation. . . . This is so clear, so incontestably clear, that even the professors of history will understand it, though only after many years" (Trotsky). Under one law or another, then, man will yet march in his own strength up to the gates of Utopia! Withal, and above all, man is adequate to deal with God, to use Him or reject Him, know Him or unknow Him, nationalize Him for State purposes or dissolve Him as a subversive myth.

Nevertheless, concerning all this, we have to reckon with the Pauline "No." Of all that such things represent, the end, according to Paul, is nothingness. The human possibility dissolves into impossibility; the Law with its inexorable demands upon human capacity, cannot give life. It is valuable as a discipline, a restraint; it can be powerful even in the illusion of success which it may excite, in its incitements to positive action and attainment, in the sense of "immense resourcefulness and courage" which it may stimulate temporarily. But it cannot give life. Thus it can give the nations of the civilized world a Covenant; but it cannot give them the power to fulfil its terms; so that presently that Covenant itself becomes an accusation, a scandal, a ministry of condemnation and death. It can give civilization a rule, a discipline, an ideal; it cannot infuse the righteousness which equates with that ideal; so that in the end the ideal becomes an indictment. "The *Pax Europaica* cannot be achieved by protocols or treaties, by pacts, by alliances or by the League of Nations. It can only come about by a spiritual change" (Voigt). This also is the Pauline No! Is then the League against the Peace? Heaven forbid! But no law has been

given that can *give-life* and the spiritual change that comes of it.

This, according to the Pauline Gospel, is the crisis under which the world of man perpetually lives. We are all shut up under sin. All religion, all law-work, every ideology, as the outcome of human energy and moral ambition, bear within themselves the seed of death and corruption. Yet we are shut up to this same disability. "The moment we become aware of ourselves and of our position in the world through the commandment of God, which meets us in the known uncertainty of our present existence, we are led onwards to the final possibility of religion. . . . We stretch out our ailing arms towards the 'Yes' which confronts us invisibly in the 'No' by which we are imprisoned" (Barth). We are shut up under sin and in custody to the Law until faith comes; that is, until the Gospel of God declares itself to us. For this is the faith through which we pass into a new relationship with God as the redeemer and justifier of the ungodly, and hence into a new relationship with all things.

Again the Question!

Here also, yet once more, the question insists itself: Is not Christianity itself always in danger of hardening into a "law"? Is there not a legal self-justifying righteousness of Churchmanship and Free Churchmanship, of altar and pew, of conformity and nonconformity? Is there not a righteousness of the liberal intellect which finds justification in a rationalized faith, adequate to meet the questions of the modern mind, but blind to the question which the Faith itself *raises* and the problem, the offence, the scandal, it *creates*?

But then, too, is it not precisely here, at this point of the Gospel Faith itself, that Paul's standpoint seems remote even from those of us who would call ourselves evangelical? With hand on heart can we declare it otherwise? Can we

indeed behold the historical drama of redemption as he beheld it? Are we not thrust back by a hundred points of interrogation when we would approach the historical Gospel as he knew it and preached it? *I declare unto you the gospel . . . which ye have received, and wherein ye stand. . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* (1 Cor. xv. 1, 3, 4). Is this our glad Gospel also? Every Easter Sunday, when we who are ministers of the Word ascend the pulpit, is it not with the consciousness of a problem that has to be dealt with and not simply good news that is to be proclaimed? And are we the more faithful and the more truly apostolical if we are unaware of any problem at all? Behold in Easter week how our religious papers are concerned (in their front-page articles on "the Meaning and Message of Easter") to indicate to us the *exits* by which we may decorously escape. After all it is always possible to discourse upon "Immortality," upon "The Reality of the Spiritual World," upon "the Triumph of Love."

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this. . . . So Paul departed from among them (Acts xvii. 32, 33). And what if at this point he depart from us also, or we from him? Not indeed that we are either mockers or deniers, but we are forced to be *questioning* men: and this historical-supernatural *mythus*—is this indeed the Gospel that is to lead us out of bondage? Instead does not this also harden into a law, an orthodoxy, a demand that either we justify ourselves as believers by works of the intellect or enslave ourselves to some dictatorial authority in the region of faith itself? And if this is so, can we still find it in our hearts to say, "May God never relieve us of this questioning! May He enclose us with questions on every side! May He defend us from

every answer which is not itself a question! May He bar every exit and cut us off from all simplifications!" (Barth)? Is it that faith can be no other than despair touched by the finger of God? Is it that only through the void of despair we pass into that sphere, as if into a new dimension, in which faith lives and moves? Even so we must not too readily infer that, because we can employ the heroics of despair, *we* are the truly desperate men!

All these things we may set down as questionings that are wrung out of us. We may acknowledge ourselves men in straits and difficulties. As we follow this Epistle we find at least that we, too, are "shut up"—unto faith or doubt, unto life or death. Let us read on! What is clear is that no law, no system, no culture, as the expression of the humanly possible or desirable, can carry us forward to the ultimate deliverance. It may hold out the prospect of it, it may have its negative and even positive uses as a temporary ministry; but in the end it leaves us disillusioned. We pass "from virtue to excellence"—and from excellence to frustration and condemnation. Even so, in all this, we are in the hands of God.

Chapter Six

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

III. 24-9

Thus the Law has been our pedagogue—our disciplinarian and master-in-charge (paedagogus—"frequently a superior slave entrusted with the moral supervision of the child"—Lightfoot)—up to Christ, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now, the Faith having come, we are no longer under a pedagogue, living a life of blind obedience to rules and regulations. No! for you are all, Jews and Gentiles alike, sons of God through your faith—sons of

God in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been immersed—baptized—into Christ have put on Christ—even as, after your baptism, you were robed anew! And all of you were robed alike! Yes—there is no Jew nor Greek, there is no bondman nor freeman, there is no male and female! in Christ Jesus you are all one. But if you are in Christ then it also follows that you are Abraham's offspring, for that is what He Himself is; and so you are heirs, in very truth, of the covenanted blessing; but heirs, mark, according to the Promise, and not by reason of the Law.

Understand that the age of Law has its place in the economy of God. The Judaic religion—yes, and your own pagan religions, which held you in subjection to gods which were not gods (iv. 8), and your own philosophies, which instructed you in the wisdom of man but fell short of the knowledge of God (I Cor. i. 21)—all these were for our discipline. They shut us in, they held us in ward, that we might learn the insufficiency and futility of all human possibility. It has been a hard training, but it was necessary. The world of man is not naturally self-abnegating. In the world's eyes Jacob's ladder let down from heaven to earth is never so attractive as the Babel tower rising ambitiously from earth to heaven. Mankind has to be taught, in the school of hard experience, the folly of its own wisdom and the weakness of its own strength. *Thus the Law has been our mentor up to the coming of Christ, to prepare us for the Gospel that we might be justified by faith.* That has been its use, its function.

But now, the Faith having come, we are no longer under tutelage. It is no longer for us to abide under the old rudimentary, puerile discipline. No; we have come of age; we have put away childish things: for, through your faith in Christ Jesus you are, all of you, Jews and Gentiles alike, sons of God, even as Christ Jesus, in the glory of His risen life, is Son of God. Of course, in the eternal purpose and decree

of God that is what you always were; but so long as an heir is under age he cannot exercise his proper privileges; he is less a son than a servant, under the discipline of his mentors (iv. 1): but when once he is of age he is free and enjoys all the prerogatives of his sonship. And that is your true position now—unless you have sold your birthright! unless all you have passed through has gone for nothing! Through faith you are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17).

Does this stagger you? Your new teachers would have you qualify yourselves by circumcision and Law-work to become the adopted sons of Abraham. Well, I have told you that if you believe God and the Promises of God as Abraham did, you are already his true descendants. But now I am telling you that by faith you are sons of—GOD! That indeed may sound in the ears of your new teachers as blasphemy. And so it is, if it is not the truth! And certainly it is not a matter of human attainment; it is not a matter of “experience”; it is not something which we dare proclaim on the witness of our own spirits, nor as a mystical certitude forced up from the depths of our religious consciousness. It is a declaration which only the Word and Spirit of God can make and only faith can receive; yes, faith like Abraham’s; faith that staggers not at the Promise, though there is nothing but the Promise to hold by; faith that triumphs *over* experience and all contrary actualities; faith in the Word of Him Who calleth the things that are not as though they were (Rom. iv. 17). But by this faith you are all, Jew and Gentile, sons of God.

Come now, is this indeed new doctrine to you? Do you not know, have you not been taught, the meaning of your Christian baptism? Do you not know that your baptism signified your immersion into Christ, into His life, His death, His risen life? Do you not know that *as many of you as have been immersed into Christ have put on Christ*—have clothed yourselves with Him? Yes, do you not know that there is a union between Christ and all who believe in Him, so that

what *He* is means more to them than what *they* are; for now they are—what they are not! They are—what He is! Yes, we who are mortal men, in whom, as to our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; we who know the wounding and chafing of “stakes in the flesh”; we whose knowledge is all broken and fragmentary, who perceive only enigmatic reflections of reality and not reality itself; we who, in a word, are *sinners*,—even we are sons of God! We have been buried with Christ in baptism unto death and raised with Him in the newness of His resurrection life.

So, I say, we no longer reckon ourselves by ourselves but by Him. By the grace of God we are what we are; for we are what we are *not*, and the life which we now live we live not by sight nor sense but by faith and hope. By faith and hope we have been immersed into Christ; by faith and hope we have clothed ourselves with His Divine Humanity. Yes, we dare do this. We dare to know ourselves sons of God. We dare do no other, for to do otherwise would be to deny God’s witness and refuse His grace. Yet, to know ourselves sons of God is to be humbled to the dust; it is to die daily to all glorying in the flesh. For how shall we boast in ourselves, in our own superiority of class or rank or race—we who are sons of God in Christ Jesus? In Him all such distinctions are dissolved. Immersed into Him and clothed with His Humanity we are no longer set apart as *Jew* and *Greek*, *bondman* and *freeman*, *male* and *female*; in Him *we are all one*.

What is the meaning then of this new concern of yours to become honorary Jews and “children of Abraham” through submission to the Jewish Law? Does not the greater include the less? If you have the dignity of children of God surely you have the privileges of children of Abraham! for verily *if you are in Christ then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the Promise*. But let us go over the ground again for I would have this made clear to you once for all.

FROM SERVITUDE TO SONSHIP

IV. 1-7

What I am saying is this: As long as the heir is under age he differs in nowise from a servant, though he is, by inheritance, lord of all the estate; but he is under the authority of guardians and stewards, until the time appointed in advance by the father. And so we also have been in tutelage. While we were (spiritually) infants we were held in subjection—in bondage—under the elements of the world. But, when the fulness of the time arrived, God sent forth (from Himself) His Son, born of woman, born under Law (lit. “come of woman, come under law”—His coming was into this same dispensation and economy under which we were held in subjection), that those who were under Law He might ransom, so that we might duly receive the sonship that was ours by the Will and grace of God. But also, because you are sons, God sent forth (from Himself) the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying earnestly and importunately, “Abba!” “Father!”¹ So you are servant no longer but son, every one of you; and if son then heir also—heir to all the covenanted blessings—through God’s appointment.

What I am saying is that a religion of Law, of external rules and ordinances, belongs to the spiritual nonage of man, and we ourselves have been under its discipline. For you know, as long as the heir is under age he differs in nowise from a servant—from a slave! He is under the control of guardians: he is in tutelage until the time fixed in advance, when, according to the paternal appointment, his coming of age shall be duly recognized. And so it was with us. We were put under discipline; we were subjected to outward rules

¹ Cf. Mark xiv. 36; Rom. viii. 15. Perhaps a liturgical formula in the primitive Church. “The Aramaic word meant *Our father*, denoting the human relationship. When Christ applied it to God, He expressed the unique intimacy which He enjoys and communicates” (G. Kittel).

and ordinances which we now see to have been rudimentary and puerile. Moreover some of you were, in the fullest sense, *held in subjection under the elements of this world*; you worshipped gods that were not gods, you believed in the influence of the stars, you deified the forces of Nature; and for this reason you made it part of your religion to observe special times and seasons—as your new teachers, for other reasons, would have you do again (iv. 9, 10).

Yes, in one way or another we were all, Jew and Gentile alike, in bondage: we were in the condition of servants. But more: we were as it were captives held to ransom—captives of sin and death. We could not by any possibility, we who were “sold under sin,” deliver ourselves and find that primal liberty, that bliss of immediacy of communion with God, which is the secret of our souls that we can neither remember nor forget. Thus our nonage, being something other than mere spiritual immaturity (which a man grows out of), could not have been terminated simply by the process of time. Time could not mellow our bondage into freedom, our ignorance into wisdom, our sinfulness into holiness. Neither time nor “experience,” neither philosophy nor religion, could avail for us.

Yet time, no less than the discipline of our ignorance and bondage, was ministering to our deliverance, in the economy of God. For *when the fulness of the time arrived*, when “the time appointed in advance by the Father” was come, *God sent forth His Son*. This is the Gospel—not of men, nor by man, but of God. The action begins and ends with Him, Whose acts are—beginningless and endless. Something has come into history which history cannot comprehend and without which history could not exist. It came, because it was always there! It was always there, but it came! The Eternal has become manifest in time, not to annihilate it with unbearable glory but to fulfil the Promise of Grace. God sent forth from Himself—His Son, *come of woman*,

come under Law, come under all the conditions of our earth-born, time-born, finitude. He *came*, in the fulness of time. Time—history—gave birth to Him and became mother of the Son of God! When God took it upon Himself to deliver man He did not abhor history's unvirgin womb! Yes, the Son of God came, and that was the manner of His coming. We have been baptized into Him because He was first baptized into us. He was immersed into our earthly state and He put on our mortal humanity that we might be immersed into His heavenly state and put on His immortal Humanity.

Jesus of Nazareth came as we all came, through the gate of birth. He was born under law, under the law of His own race, His own nation, under the law of Moses and of Caesar, under the law of time and the world. That was His *incognito*. He encountered men as Man, and none of the princes of this world knew Him. He encountered men not as Answer but as Question; and, in a world preoccupied with many questions of its own, He went His way. He did not transform the world at a word; He did not shatter the kingdoms of men nor dazzle and affright the potentates of the earth. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. ii. 7, 8). But this was He, the Promised One, with Whom the ages were in travail, and for Whose coming all religion, all law, all the ignorant wisdom and all the sinful righteousness of the world, were our slave-tutors that we might be prepared for Him. Yes, this was He Who, according to the will of God, gave Himself for our sins (i. 5) *that He might ransom us all, Jew and Gentile, from our bondage, so that we might duly receive the sonship* that was ours by the love of God. This is He Whom God raised from the dead, that at last, in the divine economy of the fulness of the times, He might gather together in one all things in

Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things on earth (Eph. i. 10).

Now this is the Gospel which I brought to you Galatians at the first. It is the Word of God which reverberates in every true prophetic word of the past, and is its own authentication. It stands for the eternal Act of God in which He loved the world before the world existed, redeemed it or ever it had sinned, and by His forgiving grace bound Himself to mankind forever. And what should you do with such a Word, when once you have encountered it, but—believe it or reject it? And how should you believe it, how should you do other than reject it, if it rest only on human testimony? If the Word of God is not its own witness, then indeed our testimony were vain! But God Who sent forth His Son has *sent forth* also *the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*. It is His Spirit that *cries* in you, “*Abba!*”—“*Father!*” It is His Spirit that witnesses to every one of you that *you are servant no longer but son—son and heir of God, through God’s own appointment*. And that promised Spirit was yours when you first believed—when first you magnified God in His grace—and was sent forth, not to *make* you a son, but *because you are sons*, all of you, through faith!

Yes, my children, and does not the Spirit *cry* importunately within you still? Tell me this, for I am troubled and anxious for you: Have you altogether silenced His voice in your hearts? Even now, when this letter of mine is being read in your hearing, is there no whisper of His voice?

“Paul might have said, ‘God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts *calling* “Abba, Father.” He saith not so, but *crying* “Abba, Father,” that He might shew and set forth the temptation of a Christian who yet is but weak and weakly believeth.’ In Romans viii. he calleth this crying an unspeakable groaning. . . . Paul signifieth therefore by these words that there is yet infirmity in the godly; as he doth also in Rom. vi. when he saith, ‘The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.’

Forasmuch therefore as the sense and feeling of the contrary is strong in us, that is to say forasmuch as we feel more the displeasure of God . . . therefore the Holy Ghost is sent unto our hearts. . . . Here we feel ourselves almost gone and at the point of desperation . . . notwithstanding in the mean season the Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings, and certifieth our spirits that we are the children of God. . . . But so far off is it [from our thinking] . . . this groaning to be a cry, that scarcely we perceive it to be a groaning. For our faith . . . is very weak if we consider our own sense and feeling, and therefore we hear not this cry. We have but only the Word, which when we apprehend in this conflict, we have a little breathing . . . but this cry we hear not. . . . Yet it filleth Heaven so that the angels think they hear nothing else but this cry. But in us there is a clean contrary feeling.”—*Luther*.

The Question:

Faith and History

Yet again, then, we who would believe must face the inescapable question. By no detour can we avoid it, for any bypath that promises to lead us away from it and round it curves back upon it again. The Apostolic Gospel was set within the framework of historical-supernatural events, events which to-day are removed from the region of first-hand testimony to the region of historical and textual criticism. Supremely the Apostolic Gospel was the Gospel of the Resurrection, the actual rising from the dead, on the third day, of the Lord Jesus. Here was the divine attestation of Jesus as the Son of God; here was the certification of the atoning virtue of His death; here was the assurance of our justification and sonship:—“Paul an apostle . . . through Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead” (i. 1). Meanwhile an age of scientific criticism has shed upon the whole Gospel scene a light which has blurred, even while it has illumined, the picture.

"A kind of luminous haze, which is most difficult to penetrate, surrounds not only the figure of Jesus, but all the speakers and actors in the story; and the gospel narrative¹ itself becomes almost, though happily not quite, a kind of mystery play, setting forth the eternal counsels of God, and His laws and love for the world. . . . It seems thus that the form of the earthly no less than the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of His voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of His ways." *R. H. Lightfoot* ("History and Interpretation in the Gospels," pp. 224-5).

Whether or not this is a transient judgment, it is before us, a contemporary voice addressing us from *within* the Church. How can we who are men, and men of our own time, and not disembodied intelligences, escape from the limitations and *criteria* of our own age and re-inhabit the First Century? And if this is impossible, as it is, what is our point of contact with the historical Faith? Especially is this the question which is thrust upon, or upon which are thrust, those of us whose responsibility it is to open the Word of God to the many or the few. Can we indeed open it? Is it open to *us* who stand behind it? Or is the Bible simply the book upon which our sermon-notes are spread, and is the sermon simply "good advice in the garniture of revelation"?

Perhaps this question points us to no fruitful answer until it *impales* us—until it becomes indeed a question unto death. Perhaps we are not qualified to discuss the Gospel until we know ourselves dying men; so that we may, in this sense, reverse the Scripture (2 Cor. iv. 3) and say, If the Gospel be hid it is hid to them that are *not* perishing. For what if our "point of contact" with the historical Faith—and with the First Century—is the point of death? For then perhaps, without intending it or suspecting it, we do come

¹ The immediate reference is to the Fourth Gospel.

to share the apostolic standpoint and understand that the Gospel, the Gospel-events and Gospel-history, do not constitute *a* problem among others, but are *the* problem, summing up the whole life and history of man and the world. Then perhaps we cease to be offended by the Barthian word that for Paul the Gospel was never merely historical but "the dissolution of history in history, the destruction of the structure of events within their known structure, the end of time in the order of time."

For it is only as perishing men that we come to see that faith never terminates upon external events, upon Gospel history as such, but always upon its innermost promise and significance. It is in the magnitude of the "unhistorical" and eternal that faith lives and moves. The Eternal Word assumes the robes of history but remains forever beyond historical definition and certification. It cannot be recognized or verified by flesh and blood (Matt. xvi. 17). To the historical perception Jesus remains a name to be discussed, an enigma to be guessed at—in vain. "*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Jude and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?*" Verily! Yet the answer serves only to heighten the question. So to the grammarians and scribes of religion He remains the centre of controversy, the inaccessible storm-centre of silence and calm round which rage the endless loud debates. Even to the poetic religious sentiment He remains, as a human figure, elusive and intangible, a vision of desire, illumining the earth with His radiance yet refusing the embrace that would hold Him¹ to the earth and possess Him: "*Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended.*" The *mythus* of the historical Gospel is the

¹ "Every picture which suggests depth and perspective draws angles not as they are but as they appear to the eye when it looks into depth. Parallel lines are not drawn as parallel lines but are made to appear as if they converged on the horizon. . . . The necessity of picturing things as they seem rather than as they are, in order to record on one dimension what they are in two dimensions, is a striking analogy . . . of the problem of religion." Reinhold Niebuhr. "Beyond Tragedy": p. 5.

living sheath containing and protecting the *living* truth, yet is it the shell and not the kernel, the husk and not the grain. The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are not themselves, externally considered, the ultimates of faith: for faith penetrates to their eternal promise—the love of God, the atonement of grace, salvation by faith. Faith follows the pointing finger of Gospel history and beholds *Christ after the spirit* and cleaves to Him, even to Him Who now says, “Touch Me, for I am ascended—to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.”

Yet He that ascended is He also Who first descended—Who *came in the flesh*; and as the Christian Faith is always more than a Jesus-cult owning a human teacher so it is more than a theosophy confessing a transcendent lord or mahatma of the spirit. It is precisely at the point of impact between the eternal and the historical that the flame which is the Gospel ignites. But we cannot isolate this point and measure it; we cannot recapture the eternal-historical Moment and reduce it to a formula. In this respect the Resurrection represents the whole historical Gospel, and the Gospel of the Resurrection. Regarding the Resurrection as an event in time, we cannot witness to it. We cannot focus and photograph the first Easter as a historical occurrence. We know neither what happened nor what did not happen. We know only what is recorded—the manifestation to the few, the passing over of the many, the belief of the few, the unbelief of the many, the passion of the few, the apathy of the many. In this sense the entire Gospel touches history only to dissolve. But it is a dissolution—and more, it dissolves not as a celestially-tinted bubble bursts but as an electrical charge explodes. It is not as if nothing had happened, as if there had been no contact, no impact, no ignition and eruption of mighty forces. History bears the marks of that explosion and must bear them as long as time endures.

So our approach to the Gospel is, as it has always been, through faith; faith not knowledge, faith not sight nor even insight, and faith not in this or that historical event and our exact understanding of it, but in that to which the whole Gospel story points—the Promise of God, the saving grace of God in Christ: which faith is wrought in us through the Word itself. Moreover this faith is no mere intellectual persuasion but the casting of the soul upon God. “People do not receive the grace of God when they do not see their need of it, when they do not see their absolute need of it. As long as a man . . . thinks in his vain mind that anything else but the sovereign grace of God can save him, this man will never receive the grace of God” (Robert Thrall).

So then for us, as we have said, the Resurrection represents the whole Gospel and the whole Gospel the Resurrection. As a historical event or group of events it exists only as a question that cannot be answered, a problem that cannot be solved. For faith itself also it is a mystery, but a mystery that points Godward, a question whose answer is not in time nor in the things of the flesh but in the magnitude and order of eternal grace. Faith is faith in the recognized Promise of God which encounters us historically in the Gospel. “If the sinner ask what he is to believe, you tell him that . . . he is to believe *God’s record concerning Christ*, and ‘this record is, That God giveth to us eternal life in His Son’ ” (Thrall). Thus “the Resurrection is the emergence of the necessity of giving glory to God; the reckoning with what is unknown and unobservable in Jesus” (Barth)—unknown and unobservable to flesh and blood and to history, and discerned by faith alone, which looks beyond the pointing finger of history to the glory to which it blindly points.

By faith, then, we turn from our bondage under the false gods of this world and know God revealed in His Promises as the God of all grace. Yet it is not in our knowledge of

God that faith rests or can rest, but in His knowledge of us. In this sense faith is always self-critical and self-correcting. Indeed our own faith is not ours as a personal possession but as the reflex of the action of God. "As Luther says continually, faith does not exist as a *quality* of the soul, or as 'virtue' . . . but faith exists wherever God as the Holy Spirit speaks within the soul and Himself, within man's self, responds to the call of God" (Brunner).

So the Pauline remonstrance proceeds.—

"PROGRESS"—INTO BONDAGE

IV. 8-11

But then—formerly—indeed, not knowing God—being by nature in a state of spiritual ignorance—you were in bondage to those gods which are not really (lit. "by nature") gods at all: but now, having known God—having attained to the recognition and discernment of the only true God—but rather (lest you should think I really mean that this knowledge is the fruit of your own independent effort, and in that sense your own attainment!), having been known of God, how is it that you turn back to the weak and beggarly elements—the child's play of ritual ceremonies and rules—to which you (evidently) desire to enslave yourselves all over again. Yes, you are making it a matter of meritorious piety to observe (lit. "you go along with and observe") holy days and months and seasons and years (cf. Col. ii. 16)! I am truly afraid for you, lest somehow, in spite of all that has happened, I have laboured over you in vain.

Yes, you Galatians, you know the change that was wrought upon you. Formerly, in your ignorance of the true and only God, *you were in bondage to gods which are not really gods*. Not only was your worship taken up with external ordinances, with festivals, celebrations and rites, it was also rooted in falsities, on account of which you sought to propitiate

divinities that were not by nature divine. But when the Gospel was preached to you, you saw the glory of the true God in the face of Jesus Christ; you believed, and through faith a new and holy Spirit came upon you, even the Spirit of God Himself: thus God, the true, gracious, forgiving, redeeming God, became real to you and you confided in Him with the simple confidence of children. Yes, I was with you and I beheld your faith. *But now, having attained to this knowledge of God, or rather, having been known of God* (for your faith stands in His knowledge of you and not in your own spiritual discernment), what is this strange thing that is happening? Lo and behold, *you turn back* to a way of worship which has more in common with your old forsworn religions of external ordinances and vain superstitions than with the spiritual faith of the Gospel! For I declare to you once more ~~that~~ your recent so-called advance in religion is no advance at all; it is a relapse into childishness, into the puerilities out of which you had been delivered, a turning back *to the weak and beggarly elements*, the observance of rudimentary rites and ceremonies, which you had left behind. How is it that you want to *enslave yourselves all over again*? Truly your new Jewish-Christian teachers have bewitched you! They have persuaded you to return to a religion of prescriptive rites and regulations, to "Law-work," to a "righteousness" which consists of outward observances through which you are supposed to obtain merit before God. So *you* are scrupulous to *observe holy days and months and seasons and sabbatic years*, after the manner of the Jews! which things are indeed a shadow of things to come, but the substance is Christ (Col. ii. 16, 17). You are going back from substance to shadow! You are going back from the world-faith, which brings the good news of God's grace to all peoples and nations, to a racial religion which excludes everybody who does not conform to Jewish laws about food and drink, new moons and holy days—everybody who does

not consent, by circumcision, to become an honorary Jew! I tell you frankly, *I am afraid*, I am terrified, *for you*. I am afraid *lest somehow*, in spite of all we have gone through together, it should be found that *I have laboured upon you in vain*.

The Question:

The Religion of God or the Religion of Man?

In all this, then, must the modern Churchman turn to Paul with, "So saying thou condemnest us also"? Can we indeed afford to have him in our councils? Is it not better that we should retain his name but suppress his too urgent and vehement voice? Are we entirely at our ease in his company? Are we, with our Church Year, our "fixed" and "movable" feasts, our Saints' Days and holy seasons, our churchings and baptisms and Easter Communions, put a little on our defence? Not indeed that we have an ill conscience in these things, but the Pauline remonstrance does seem to invite defensive exposition! Or is it that, in sober truth, we, too, have reason to fear? Is it possible that we, too, can mistake retrogression for advance, relapse for recovery; that we, too, can forfeit the inward to the outward and turn back from the righteousness of God to the righteousness of men? Is it possible that we, too, can exalt law over grace and turn from God to—"religion"? Is it even possible that we can turn to the apostolate of some proprietary and exclusive, and perhaps even racial, Faith and speak of the "English" Church, the "Roman" Church—or yet "the Free Churches"—with an exclusive inflection?

This is the recurrent question: and truly we have reason to fear—supposing that we are still capable of so honest and salutary an emotion; and still greater reason, if we are not. We may pervert our very evangelicalism itself into a law and a righteousness that is of the law: yet "in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth anything nor Uncircumcision, but faith working by love" (v. 6). We have not learned the

lesson of grace and faith by heart (and who has perfectly learned it?) until we have come to understand that the Gospel of God is the negation of all human pride, and most of all of spiritual pride. They that have this lesson by heart "are then lords of all things when they are most destitute of all things, according to that saying *"having nothing and yet possessing all"* (Luther).

We have reason to fear when we lose the evangelical note of wonder and surprise and assume too easily that, because we are religious people with a religious tradition, we know God. When Faith has passed into culture and culture hardened into civilization, when our Christianities, orthodox or reformed, become organized and systematized conventions, and piety comes to mean a meritorious zeal for traditional rules and observances, then we have to reckon once more with the question-mark which Paul sets over against all religions of law. It is not through law that God is known, except mediately and through an unapproachable, impenetrable veil. God is known only in His Promises.

So it is that in every period of declension the supreme criticism of Christianity arises from within, from the very centre of the Faith itself: and thus, when Galatian Christianity is threatened with decline, the apostle, in a strained metaphor, describes himself as travelling again "*until Christ be formed within you*"—Christ in Whom all the divine Promises sound forth as the Everlasting Yea of God (2 Cor. i. 20).

Chapter Seven

ZEAL, TRUE AND FALSE

IV. 12-20

I beseech you, brothers, be as I am, for I too am as you are—or as you once were! You have never wronged me at all. No; for though it was, as you know, in weakness of body that I preached the Gospel to you at first, and my

physical condition must have been a trial to you, nevertheless you did not despise me nor reject me with contempt on that account, but you received me as if I had been an angel of God—yes, Christ Jesus Himself! What then has become of your happy state of mind about me? [“Where then is your blessing?” (Wyclif)—“How great was the boasting of your felicity then?” (Geneva)—“You congratulated yourselves. Now what has become of all that?” (Moffatt).] For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me.

Well, so I have now become your enemy, have I? by telling you the truth!—by being too outspoken, too zealous (lit. “by truthing it with you” too much)! As for your new teachers, they are certainly zealous for you, but not in a right way. No; they want to exclude you from fellowship with the Gentile churches in Christ, and of course from us, in order that you, in turn, may be zealous for them—for them alone! Well, if it is in a right way, it is right that you should be zealously sought after—that you should be cared for and made much of—at all times—and not only when I am with you!—you my little children, with whom I travail again until Christ shall have been formed in you! And how I am wishing to be present with you now and to change my tone! For truly I am perplexed about you. [“I am confoundid among you” (Wyclif). “I stande in a doute of you” (Tyndale).]

I beseech you, brothers, show yourselves one with me, for I am certainly one with you! I, at any rate, have not drawn back! And don't suppose for a moment that there is any change in my personal feelings toward you all. Why should there be? As far as I am concerned you never wronged me at all. No; on the contrary, how can I forget your kindness to me while I was with you? For though it was, as you know, through physical infirmity that I sojourned among you at first and preached the Gospel to you, and my condition must have been a trial to you, all the same you never let me think

I was a burden to you, *you did not despise me nor turn away from me; instead you received me as an angel of God—yes, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself!* You were glad to have me in your midst! You congratulated yourselves! These things I shall never forget.

And I have not changed! The Gospel I preached then I preach still. But what has happened, I wonder, to change your own feelings for me? *For I bear you witness that, in those days, afflicted as I was with that repulsive ophthalmic trouble, you would, if possible, have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me.* But now, it seems, *I have become your enemy!* Tell me what I have done! Have I been too zealous for you? Or rather has my zeal for you been too sincere, too faithful, too plainspoken? For of course I know that others *are zealous for you*, too, but hardly in the same way—*not in a right way!* They court you and make much of you in order that they may shut you away from your Gentile-Christian brothers and draw you into their own exclusive Jewish-Christian communion. They want to separate you, *exclude you*, isolate you, so that they may have you to themselves, and so *that you in turn may be zealous for them—exclusively!* They believe sincerely that no one can be saved unless he is circumcised and becomes by adoption a Jew, and a member of the Church of the Circumcision, and keeps all the Jewish laws and customs of their community. That means that you cut yourselves off from the rest of us and avow your detestation of us as heretics and sinners against the Law! Truly they are zealous men, but that is their mind: and that is what I mean when I say they are zealous for you and make much of you, but not in a right way. They are Churchmen; they think they are the only true Churchmen: and they name the name of Christ: but they do not understand, they do not really and fully believe, the Gospel! They have got hold of some other gospel which is not a gospel.

Well, it is a fine thing to be *zealously sought after* and made much of, *in a right way*, at any time—yes, *at all times, and not only when I am with you!* But mind that it really is in the right way! Judge everything by the standard of the Gospel. Judge everything by what it makes of Christ, who is in Himself the everlasting Yea—God's Yes to man.

Oh, my dear *children*, how can I help being zealous for you myself, absent from you though I am! Can't you understand? Can't you see I am enduring a mother's pangs for you, all over again? I know not how to put it. I am in *travail*. I am in the throes of spiritual childbirth for you; I am in agony until I know that your own hearts and minds are—pregnant with Christ! Yes; for you are spiritual children of mine only as you are *Christ-bearers*. I am *travailing* with you *until Christ shall have been formed within you*.

And now believe me, it is no pleasure to me to have to write in the strain that I have written. I wish I had no need to write at all but were *present with you now*, so that we might talk these things over, face to face. I am sure if I were with you we should understand one another: and then I should not have to speak in this strain; I could *change my tone*. That is what I wish. But truly *I am perplexed about you*.

Come then, let us try once more to face this matter out.

THE TWO COVENANTS

IV. 21-V. 1a

Tell me, you who are set upon being under the Law, don't you hear what the Law says? For it is written in the book of Moses that Abraham had two sons, one born of the bondwoman and one born of the free woman; but while the bondwoman's son was born according to the flesh, the free woman's son was born by reason of the Promise made by God to Abraham. Which things have a special significance;

they are really an allegory, and they are allegorized thus: *These two women are the two Covenants; the one—that is, Hagar—is from Mount Sinai, bringing forth children in (and to!) bondage. For Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia; yes, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem! for Jerusalem too is in bondage with her children! But the Jerusalem on high, who is our own mother, is free as Sarah was! For so it is written (Isaiah liv. 1): “Rejoice, O thou barren one that bearest not: break forth and cry out, thou that travailest not: for many more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband!”*¹ So we, brothers, are like Isaac, children of the Divine Promise—and not of Law and bondage! But just as then, the one born according to the flesh (Ishmael) persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now, too: the children of Law persecute the children of Promise! the children of the present Jerusalem, whose spiritual home is Mount Sinai, persecute us who belong by heavenly regeneration to the Jerusalem on high! But what says the Scripture? “Put away the bondwoman and her son, for the bondwoman’s son shall in no circumstance be heir along with the son of the free woman” (Gen. xxi. 10–12). So then, brothers, we are children not of any bondwoman but of the free woman—in the freedom with which Christ freed us.

Surely you are familiar with the story of Ishmael and Isaac, you who would be Abraham’s children! And surely to you it is more than a dead record—you, who are religious men! For you, whatever it may be for others, history is itself and something more; for you all history is related to the Purpose of God, and that Purpose invests events with a manifold meaning, with meanings within meanings, so that one set of events may be the symbol and prophecy of another. So then, speaking to you as religious men, and using language, therefore, in its deeper significance, you

¹ “. . . her that hath the husband.”—I have retained this literal translation of the passage as it stands in iv. 27 because it agrees with Paul’s specific use of the text. Sarah was barren, Hagar “had the husband.”

will understand why I (thus addressing you) should press you to consider from which of the two lines of Abrahamic descent you would trace your pedigree! Are you his children through Ishmael, the son of the slave-woman, or Isaac the freeborn heir of the Promises?

For you, who are now serious students of Jewish history under your new teachers from Jerusalem, and are not unacquainted with our Jewish allegorical method—manifestly you will recognize that this Abrahamic story catches the light of later history and flashes out with special significance. You see Abraham not simply as a desert chieftain belonging to an isolated past but as a symbolic figure related to the purpose and method of God, a portent for all time: and so likewise you see these two sons of his, and their mothers, as types and prophecies of things to come. Thus they may be *allegorized*.

Think then of these two mothers, *the bondswoman*, Hagar, and *the free woman*, Sarah, as types of *the two Covenants* which mark God's dealings with man, the Covenant of Law and bondage and the Covenant of Grace and liberty. *Hagar* (the alien slave-woman, bearing her son in servitude and taking him into the wilderness) represents the Law! Let us use another allegory and say she stands for *Mount Sinai in Arabia*, the Mountain of the Law! The Law (Mount Sinai) is the slave-mother *bringing forth children in bondage!* And, to bring this correspondence down to the present time, let me say that Hagar represents—*Jerusalem!* Yes, I myself say this as a Jew, an Israelite, who has unceasing sorrow of heart for his own people, and could wish himself accursed (Rom. ix. 1-3) if only they might pass over his accursed body into the fulness of truth and blessing; nevertheless I declare to you that to-day Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of the Circumcision, the Jerusalem of the Law and the Temple, the holy Feasts and Sabbaths and ordinances, *is in spiritual bondage with her children*. She is the slave-mother. Hagar, Mount

Sinai, Jerusalem—there you have the lineal descent according to type!

That is why I am pressing you, who have learnt so much from your new teachers from Jerusalem, to consider which is your own line of spiritual descent. For I tell you plainly, we who put our trust in the Promises of God and the God of the Promises—we do not acknowledge this present earthly Jerusalem as our spiritual mother! We do not trace our descent through Hagar, the Law, Mount Sinai! No; our spiritual mother is the heavenly Mount Zion, *the Jerusalem on high*, the City of the living God, the City of Christ Jesus and the Covenant of Grace, the City of the spirits of good men made perfect, the Church of the firstborn, and myriads of angels in festal assembly (Heb. xii. 22-4. Cf. Moffatt)! And truly our mother is not in servitude, she is *free*!

Yet, so far as earthly reckoning and earthly history go, this spiritual City has been all but childless through the ages! How multitudinous have been the children of Law and of bondage; how few the children of Grace and liberty! So it was with Sarah—until the appointed time. In the sorrow of her childlessness, her desolation, she was constrained to give the bondwoman to her husband. But listen how the Prophet Isaiah sings: "*Rejoice, O thou barren that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for many more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband!*" And is it not coming to pass? Let those who would put you in bondage to the Law—to Jerusalem—boast as they please; the children of Promise, the heirs of the new Covenant, are multiplying throughout the world. The children of our spiritual City are going to be far more than the children of Jerusalem!

Nevertheless our allegory holds at yet another point. For just as the bondwoman's son, Ishmael, mocked and *persecuted* Isaac, the son of the free woman, so *now* the men of Jerusalem deride and oppose our churches where God is

worshipped in the spirit of sonship and in the freedom of Christ. You have seen this for yourselves; you know the bitter hostility of the Jewish synagogues toward our churches; and now you see how your new teachers, who claim to represent the authorities at Jerusalem, oppose *us* and would debar you from us. Theirs is the spirit of Ishmael, not of Isaac: they are jealous of the liberty of the freeborn! Be it so. Theirs is the opposition of men: what can it avail against the purpose of God? For *what says the Scripture?* "*Put away the bondwoman and her son: for the bondwoman's son shall in no circumstance be heir along with the son of the free woman.*" That is the Divine Order, and it cannot be reversed. The shadow can never subjugate the substance, nor the temporary outlast the permanent, nor the transient dispensation of Law vie with the eternal dispensation of the Love of God!

Yes, *that* and no other is the consideration. We are witnessing to the Divine Order. For if indeed we are contending simply for our own religious ideas, if our gospel is of men and of human devising, if we are apostles simply of our own "religious movement," then verily we and our religion belong to this world and must run our doubtful course and end with all the rest in dissolution. For then we represent only one more human possibility seeking to scale the ultimate impossibility—one more expression of that restless activity which marks the chronic sickness of man's soul and ends in despair and death. But we certify you that all along our witness has been to something other than all this; to something which we do not pretend fully to understand and which, in the nature of things, we cannot understand (1 Cor. xiii. 9), but which verily has apprehended us and thrust us forth; namely, the eternal Act of God, which moves forward through time to its own eternal fulfilments. Our knowledge is but in broken fragments, and we prophecy accordingly; but this we testify in Christ: That over against the impulse of sinful man to live his own life and achieve

his own well-being and his own righteousness in independence of God, which means frustration and bondage and death, moves the purpose of God to restore man to Himself, to *His* life and *His* righteousness, which means liberty and life eternal.

It is in relation to this Purpose that all human events and possibilities find their significance. The Law subserves this Purpose, and even sin, finding no refuge in its own insanities, is subject to this one inviolable order. Hagar the bondwoman, no less than Sarah the free, is under the eye of God, and Ishmael, no less than Isaac, shall become a nation under the one all-sovereign decree (Gen. xxi. 13). But the sovereignty is of God and it is Grace that reigns. Hagar shall not supplant Sarah nor Ishmael Isaac; the Law shall not overrule the Promise nor the religion of Law prevail against the gospel of Grace: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. This, brothers, is our confidence; nay, "our confidence" is nothing; we are men: but this is the Word of God that has thrust us forth. It has pleased God to call us by His grace and reveal His Son to us; therefore our witness is to that which is above all human possibility and initiative, above the world and the wisdom of the world, even to that which is the primal origin and end of all things—the redeeming, reconciling love of God. This was the Gospel which we brought to you, which also you received, and in which you stand—if indeed you do stand! *So then, brothers, we are the children, not of any "bondwoman" but of the free—in the freedom with which Christ freed us.*

LAW AND GRACE

Here at any rate we shall not dismiss the Pauline theme as something dated and irrelevant. In one form or another the antinomy of Law and Grace is always before us.

It belongs to our present existence, to the nature of the

universe in which we find ourselves, and the order of human society in which we live, that we should be under Law. We are hemmed in on every hand by natural laws; we find our own personalities, our sensations, appetites, thoughts, volitions, subject to rules which we may only dimly understand but which we cannot evade; and we are committed to social, national and international relationships involving a complexus of laws from which likewise we cannot disengage ourselves. What line then is a man to take in this actual world? If he were a perfect being, like Swedenborg's Primal Man, dwelling in the light of essential wisdom, "seeing all things in one complex, the outermost from the innermost, the circumferences from the centre" and acting accordingly, the question would not arise. But man is an imperfect being inhabiting an imperfect world, but nevertheless haunted with a dream of perfection and vexed with a sense of profound disharmony. How then shall he justify his existence? What line shall he take?

"All natural morality and ethics—whether based on religious or rational grounds—are either eudaemonistic or legalistic" (Brunner). Man proposes to himself the achievement of the Good conceived either as happiness and well-being (eudaemonism) or as righteousness (legalism). Under these two heads may be subsumed the programmes of the great ethical, social-economic and religious systems of the world, as also the inchoate moralizings of the average thinking man. The idea of the Good to be attained and the scale of values to be accepted may differ according to differing ideologies, despotic or democratic, communistic or imperialistic, racial or humanitarian; but the emphasis is apt to fall either upon the Good conceived as Well-being or upon the Good conceived as Righteousness, and in either case the Good is to be achieved through effort, through obedience to law.

"The universality of conscience, together with the broad

uniformity of its influence on conduct, convince me . . . that it must have been implanted in us by a Creator Who had a clear aim in the creation and slow evolution of this universe. . . . This is (I think) my only faith" (Arnold Bennett). "What is the most fundamental need of man? . . . I hazard the belief that the majority . . . would agree that his deepest need was to discover something, some being or power, some force or tendency, which was moulding the destinies of the world—something not himself, greater than himself, with which he yet felt he could harmonize his nature" (Julian Huxley).—"I do not measure the historical process by the yardstick of one's personal fate. On the contrary, I appraise my fate objectively, and live it subjectively, only as it is inextricably bound up with the course of social development" (Trotsky).—"Progress is the object of religion. . . . It is before us as an invisible reality—this is our faith; to realize it visibly—this is our duty" (Loisy).—"Grace is the tendency and faculty given to us all gradually to incarnate the Ideal" (Mazzini). What is common to these random citations is that the justification of life is found in man's working *toward* an ultimate Good conceived either in terms of conscience and righteousness or in terms of well-being; and it is generally assumed that man's powers are adequate to the task; he is capable of fulfilling—at length—the law of his being. Thus for Stoicism this meant the attainment of "virtue"; for Confucianism, the attainment of *Jen* (benevolence); for Judaism, the attainment of legal righteousness; for Buddhism, the attainment of Nirvana; for Marxism, the integration of the individual in the Marxist State; for Fascism, his identification with the national Fascist will to power and government.

This then is the nature of that righteousness or well-being which is "of the law," and whose servitors, according to Paul, are, and must be, in bondage. For alike for the hedonist and the materialist in their quest for well-being,

and the moralist in his quest for righteousness, the objective is the realization of the Good by and through man himself (Brunner).¹ It is in fact man's declaration of independence, in which he stands over against God, or the ideal Good, seeking self-justification and confident that he can win it, confident that he can, by his own effort, "harmonize his nature" with the Ideal. This implies, as Brunner has pointed out, the assumption that man's problem centres either in his *conduct* or in his *circumstances*; or, to put it in collective terms, it implies that, while human society may be deplorably unideal in its *behaviour* and its political-economic *conditions*, nevertheless, when these are at length corrected, all will be well. Paul, on the other hand, presses the problem backward and inward, from conduct and circumstances to man's *existence* as a *sinner*. By no moral effort can man disengage himself from his own quality, nor cancel the fact that what he *is* gives character to what he *does*. He may stylize himself according to different patterns, but he cannot change the stuff of his nature; he cannot cancel the Fall nor extricate himself from his own sinnerhood.

Here then is the "bondage" and "curse" of the Law. It encounters man as he stands in his vain self-confidence and false autonomy and challenges him to a supreme enterprise which, beginning in self-deception, proceeds through continuous frustration to despair and death. Unable completely to silence the witness of his own bad conscience, man is evermore goaded to renewed and more feverish intensity of effort, or involves himself in further self-deception by attempting to tamper with the very imperatives which challenge him; by attempting, that is to say, to depress his ideals to the level of his attainments. And withal this very effort toward the desired good is in itself evil, this very endeavour after righteousness is in itself unrighteous (Brunner). For even assuming the desired good to be

¹ See "Divine Imperative": Chapter VIII.

achievable, a good attained only from a sense of duty, or with the aim of obtaining merit and self-justification, or from a desire for power or security or self-approval, can never be equated with *the Good*; it is in fact simply the expression of man's alienation from goodness at its source and his ambition to achieve a (spurious) "good" of his own which shall fortify his self-sufficiency. This is the dilemma discerned alike by the Chinese sage and the Christian reformer. It is the truth at the heart of Lao Tse's saying that rectification and transformation cannot be obtained by doing anything to bring them about—and at the heart of Chuang Tse's exhortation to the moralists, "Cast off your holiness." "It is most true," says Luther, "that they which do the Law do it not."

This is man's bondage, and so far as he himself is concerned, he is, in the Pauline phrase, shut up to it. The Law is his slave-mother, and he knows no other. In this actual sinful world man is born under Law—and ordained never to find peace in it. To depress the Law to the level of political utilitarianism, State-service, or materialistic ideology, is, in the end, through an over-rationalizing or anti-rationalizing process, to destroy its authority and rehabilitate it as a dictatorship of Force—augmented by a deliberate cultivation of mass-hysteria. To retain it on the spiritual level is to goad men to seek defence from its intolerable imperatives by a flight into magic and superstition, or by a distortion and prostitution of the spiritual itself into sexual vitalism, Nature-worship or Dionysiac ecstasy; or else to seek defence by the cultivation of a hard and sterile Pharisaism. So Herr Julius Streicher, standing before the sacred bonfire on the Hesselberg (June 24, 1938) addressed the Nazi Youth Demonstration:

"We need no men in black to make our confessions to, that we may gain strength for the coming year. When we look into the flames of this holy fire and throw our sins into them,

we can descend from this mountain with clean souls. We have become our own priests. We approach nearer to God after climbing this mountain."

Thus through reason or unreason, materialism or magic, idealism or instinctivism, asceticism or libertinism, religion or irreligion, man seeks escape from the condemnation of the Law, and every escape is a cul-de-sac. Such is the tragic human dilemma.

But, according to Paul, the Law, though a divine ordinance, is neither God's last word to man nor His first. In this actual sinful world it is necessary for man's discipline and the exposure of his insufficiency; but it exercises no more than an interim ministry (iv; Rom. vii). The Eternal Word, preceding all history and consummating it, is the Word not of Law but of Promise—free, unmerited, unconditional, and bestowed of pure grace. Thus it is not the purpose of God that man's relation to the Good should be one of bondage and frustration; it should be one of liberty and harmony; and in Christ Jesus this purpose has fructified in history. In Christ God makes Himself known not as demanding but as bestowing, not as bidding men first climb to Him up the steep ascent of holiness, but as first seeking their reconciliation to Himself on the tragic level of their own guilt and need. This is the Gospel. In the fulness of time has come into history this Eternal Moment in which the truth of grace has been brought within the reach of the earth-born and sin-bound sons of men. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under Law, that those who were under Law He might ransom, so that we might duly receive the sonship that is ours according to His own gracious purpose. This, according to the Christian Gospel, is the divine answer to the mute, uninterpreted need of man. The Buddhist prayer of Santideva expresses no mere wistful dream born of man's heart-hunger, but points to Christ.

"O that I might become for all beings the soother of pain!
O that in times of famine I might myself become drink and food!
O that I might be for the poor an inexhaustible treasure!
All my incarnations to come, all my goods, all my merits, past,
present and future, I renounce with indifference so that the
end of all beings may be attained.
I give up my body to all beings to do what they will. . . .
If their hearts are angry against me and bear me ill-will, let
this help me to bring about the ends of all. . . .
O that I might be the defender of the forsaken, the guide of
voyagers, and, for those who long for the Other Bank, the
boat, the causeway, the bridge!"¹

So, "from the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to Thee" (Tagore).

The life of grace, then, is the life of liberty, for it harmonizes ethics and religion with the primal needs of man's nature. "Previously life, even at its best, is always a life directed *towards* God; now henceforth life is lived *from* God as its centre. In this new possibility of life the old life is seen to be perverted; and it becomes manifest that [legalism,] the attempt to attain God by our own efforts rather than to base all our life on God . . . is the root of sin" (Brunner). Henceforth it is known not only that in Him we live and have our being, but also in Him we move—toward Him.

"It is known"; but what is this "knowledge" save faith? "The things about us are all adversant to the promises of God. He promiseth immortality, and we are clothed with mortality and corruption. He pronounceth that He accounteth us for just: we are covered with sins. He testifieth that He is merciful and benevolent: His external judgments threaten His wrath" (Calvin). Over against the actualities of the world and the experience of our own hearts is the Promise of God in Christ. It beckons us in history, but it points beyond history and beyond present

¹ Quoted in Renee Haynes' "Pan, Caesar and God" from the *Testament of Man* by Arthur Stanley.

experience. It is never more than a beckoning, a signal, a call; that is, it is addressed to *faith*. Faith in the human heart is never a pure and unhindered activity; where it exists doubt also exists, and faith manifests itself as a conflict: "the believer is always also the unbeliever, the sinner" (Brunner). Nevertheless where faith exists in any measure, where, that is, there is a believing response to the divine grace and promise in Christ, there, in that same measure, is liberty—liberty to turn from a feverish and ineffectual clutching after an earned acceptance with God to a humble reliance upon His goodness and a patient waiting upon Him for the righteousness yet to be revealed.

Wherefore "make a stand and do not slip back into any yoke of bondage." For "Paul here knitteth up the matter with a notable conclusion" (Luther).

"MAKE A STAND!"

V. 1b-6

Make a stand, then, and do not let yourselves be held down again under any yoke of bondage. For mark! I, Paul, say to you deliberately, That if you are circumcised, if you submit to circumcision as something necessary to your salvation, or to your "religious obedience," Christ will profit you nothing. Yes, and I protest again to every man who gets circumcised, that, so far from his getting any real profit or credit from it, he makes himself instead a debtor pledged to render obedience to the entire Jewish Law. You, whoever you are, who are by way of being "justified" by Law—you are really deprived (you have deprived yourselves) of all the benefit coming to you from Christ ["ye ben voidid awei fro Christ" (Wyclif); "gone quyte from Christ" (Tyndale): "evacuated from Christ" (Rheims): "you are done with Christ" (Moffatt)]; you have fallen away from grace. For it is by faith (and not by ceremonial rites!) that we, in spirit (and by the grace of the Spirit of

God) patiently, steadfastly *await the righteousness for which we hope*—not the outward, lifeless righteousness of Law-work but the inward, vital righteousness of faith which ripens into love: the only righteousness which really does fulfil the Law! *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but faith working through love* (Moffatt: “active in love”).

Stand fast, I beseech you! Don't let your liberty be filched away from you. Don't step back again under any yoke of bondage. Think well before you commit yourself to a course whose consequences you cannot have truly weighed or you would never have considered the course at all. Weigh them now! For see, I, Paul, say to you that if you are circumcised Christ will profit you nothing! Yes, it has come precisely to that issue, and you must face it. The house of Christ cannot be divided against itself; you cannot continue half-slave and half-free; you cannot continue Christian on the basis of a divided allegiance between the Jewish ceremonial Law and the Christian Faith. *For I testify again to every man of you who gets himself circumcised in order to make sure of his acceptance with God and of his share in the blessings of God's Kingdom, that so far from gaining anything by it he will lose everything. What you do when you submit yourself to the Jewish rite of circumcision is to make yourself debtor to the whole Jewish Law to observe it rigorously and completely. For if you enlist under that standard you must march with that army and put yourself under all its regulations and orders.*

No; I assure you these rites and ordinances are not to be played with! If your religion is to stand in that line of things, that is the line you must follow to the end: but at least let it be with your eyes open! Put your necks under the yoke if you must, but understand you are doing precisely *that*; and understand that if you follow that course you have cut yourselves off *from Christ*. So far as you are concerned

the Gospel becomes a meaningless superfluity. *You have fallen away from grace*, from love, from the liberty of love, and so from the hope of real righteousness. Instead you are going to work out a hard, strict, loveless, Christless self-righteousness which will leave you as it found you—a debtor to the Law and under its condemnation and curse.

“He that is circumcised is circumcised for fear of the Law, and he who fears disbelieves the power of Grace, and he who disbelieves can receive no benefit from that which he doubts. Or again, he that is circumcised makes the [whole] Law of force. . . . Laws are linked one to another. . . . Legal observances are linked together. For example, Circumcision has sacrifice connected with it, and the observance of days; sacrifice again has the observance of both day and place: place has the details of endless purifications; purifications involve a crowd of various observances. . . . If then thou art circumcised, but not on the eighth day, or on the eighth day but no sacrifice is offered, or a sacrifice is offered but not in the prescribed place, or in the prescribed place but not in the legal mode . . . everything is frustrated. . . . Thus having aggravated their alarm and disquieted their mind, and shewn them all the shipwreck they were to suffer [Paul] . . . opens the haven of grace which was near at hand. . . . *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*”—*Chrysostom.*

But why, O Galatians, should it be necessary for me to labour all this? I myself started you in the race; I set you on your course; and you were running well. What has happened?

Chapter Eight

LAW, LIBERTY, LOVE

V. 7-15

You were running well—gallantly! Who hindered you that you should not obey the truth? (For you are certainly not obeying it if you are allowing yourselves to be persuaded by the Circumcisionists!) *This persuasion is*

emphatically *not of Him Who calls you*. (No, it is an alien doctrine that has somehow been introduced into your fellowship and gradually spread among you, for—) “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump!*” [Wyclif: “*A litil sour-dough appeireth al the gobet*”]. But *as to you, I am persuaded in the Lord that you will have no other mind than you had before this trouble began; and he who is unsettling you will have to bear the judgment* [Wyclif: “*beare dome*”] that is coming to him, *whoever he may be*.

But as for me, *brothers, if I myself still preach circumcision* (which some would have you believe) *why am I still being persecuted* (by the Jews)? But *then* it seems—does it?—that *the scandal of the Cross has been done away with!* [“*thenne the selaundre of the cros is voidid*” (Wyclif); “*then is the scandal of the crosse evacuated*” (Rheims)]. (Some certainly wish it. But I will tell you what I wish!) *I wish that those who are throwing you into all this confusion would not stop at circumcision, but (like your own pagan priests) would get themselves sterilized!* (You know why I say that! And do you, too, take the warning to yourselves!) *For, brothers, you were called to freedom; only do not make your freedom a means to fleshly indulgence, but by love serve one another. For in this one word the whole Law is fulfilled, namely, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But, on the other hand, if you bite and devour one another* (as you have been doing since this Circumcision “gospel” has spread division and controversy among you)—*well, take care that you don’t destroy each other!* (For, unless you are careful, this controversy will end, not in a victory for either side, but in the destruction of the church.)

You were running well. How can I ever forget those early days? but what am I to think of them now? Was your enthusiasm after all merely the heat of your own spirits? Was it a merely natural excitement over a “new religion”? Was your “faith” simply an effervescent, personal devotion to me? No; I am convinced it was of God. But *who hindered*

you, who checked you and turned you out of your course—the course of obedience to *the truth*? For that is what has happened. You have shown yourselves all too human. You have allowed—a man—to turn you aside from the truth of God. For depend upon it *this* new persuasion, no matter how “religious” it may be, is a human affair; it is *not of Him Who calls you*. All the same, I recognize that the trouble is none of your own making. It is the work of a new teacher or two who have come among you. For as the saying goes, it needs only *a little leaven to leaven the whole lump*! But I have faith *in the Lord* for you that all will yet be well; and *he* who is *unsettling you shall bear* the rebuke and condemnation that are justly due to him, *whoever he is* and whatever his position may be.

As for myself and my own teaching, surely you don’t believe the report that *I, too, still preach circumcision*! Why! if that is true, how is it that *I am still persecuted* by the Jewish Synagogue? But then *the scandal of the Cross* has at last been put out of the way, has it? I am now to be allowed, am I? to compass sea and land to preach Christ, without let or hindrance from my own fellow-countrymen! Well, I can only say that *I wish those who* do so to gain proselytes for Circumcision, and who have brought all this *confusion* upon you in Galatia—I wish they *would get themselves* not simply circumcised but altogether *sterilized*! And you know well enough that I have good reason for saying that! And I say it for your own warning.

But enough. *You were called, brothers, to liberty*; That is what I am insisting upon. Only *do not* pervert liberty into libertinism and *make your freedom* in the Gospel an excuse for *fleshly indulgence*. No; yours is the liberty to obey the truth—the liberty *by love to serve one another* and bear one another’s burdens. For I repeat, circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that matters is faith working by love. That is what the Law

itself aims at; that is its essential meaning, even though, by reason of human sinfulness, it cannot achieve the goal. Yes, *the whole Law*, rightly understood, *is fulfilled in this one word*, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" That fills out all its ethical demands. And you know that in Christ Jesus our "neighbours" are not limited to members of our own race and country. In Christ there are no "foreigners," no divisions drawn between Jew and Greek, Roman and "barbarian," freeman and slave! But then, while the Law *commands* us to love our neighbour, it is only Grace that can *empower* us to do it; instead, the Law serves only to expose our own unruly obstinacy. The Law only shows up our perverse desire to *use* our neighbour, to make much of him only in order to *exploit* him and prey upon him—yes, to bite and devour him! And if you suppose the Law can do more and better in your own case, you are tragically mistaken. Well then, *if you bite and devour one another*, mind you don't *destroy one another*! Take care that all this controversy and division that has already arisen from your new zeal for a religion of law—take care it does not end in a sentence of death upon your whole community!

And why not?

Perhaps we feel that the implicit Pauline question is, And why, if you continue as you are now, should such a sentence of death not be passed? Why should not such a process of attrition and destruction be an appropriate conclusion? Why should a Church that has lost its Gospel survive? What has such a Church to offer the world, already rich in religions of great variety, except one more variety to add to the general total?

Paul's fight for the Galatian churches was a fight for their right to exist, and their right to exist centred precisely in the "offence," the "scandal," of a faith that cut across the

pride and wisdom of the world with the proclamation of the Grace of God, the Cross of Christ. It was the message that man, sin-bound and condemned, was pronounced righteous by God unto holiness and eternal life through faith—it was this that was fundamental. It was not so much that it said in a better way what other religions said in an inferior way; it said what other religions had never clearly said at all. Other religions and philosophies had been, in truth, a preparation for the Gospel, and were thus drawn into relationship to it; but their preparation was less by way of anticipating it than by way of disciplining the spirit of man in the hard school of disillusion and frustration—by way of exploring all other human possibilities and showing them to end at the barrier of the impossible.

Thus the Judaising movement in the Christian Church was a movement backward precisely because it compromised the Church's distinctive message to the world, in the interests of a "Jewish-Christian" synthesis. It conserved much, indeed, that was Christian. It revered Jesus, recognized His Messianic mission, believed in His exaltation, preserved His teachings, and looked for His return in power and glory to restore the Messianic Kingdom to Israel; but it did so in the interests of Jewish religious nationalism with its emphasis upon the Jewish *ethos*, the justifying righteousness of the Jewish Law, the moral energy and leadership of the Jewish race. Thus the Jewish system was turned back upon itself and the Christian Church was by way of becoming little more than a heretical Jewish synagogue. Yet to the average Jewish-Christian how forced and impious any other development must have seemed!

"What knowledge, what confidence, what strength was necessary to tear the new religion from its mother-earth and plant it in an entirely new one! Paul put it in competition with the Israelitish religion: "Christ is the end of the law." Not only did it bear being thus rooted up and

transplanted, but it showed that it was meant to be thus transplanted."—*Harnack*.

"Meant to be"! Yea, verily. For the Pauline protest is not really an argument from consequences, it is an argument from primal origin and design. The Church has its justification in the Gospel because the Gospel is from eternity and of God. It is the Gospel of the Resurrection; that is, it rests upon the action of God, beyond all human possibility or thought. It is thus "from the beginning," and though, as the Gospel, it is related to all the events and processes of time, it is superior to them and stands in its own right. So the Epistle to the Galatians leaves us little time for admiration of the "knowledge, confidence and strength" of the religious genius that could "tear the new religion from its mother-earth" in Palestine and successfully transplant it; instead it fixes our minds upon the Divine Word itself and the Divine action. God proclaims Himself the Creator-Redeemer of sinful men, and this is the touch of *grace* that makes the whole world kin.

But this also is the world's scandal; this is what made Christians appear in contemptuous pagan eyes like "worms in conventicle" or frogs holding conference in a swamp and croaking "*Believe! Believe!*" "They who invite us to become initiated into other religious Mysteries begin by announcing, 'Let him approach who is free from all stain, whose soul is conscious of no guilt'; but let us hear what sort these people invite: 'Whosoever is a sinner, whosoever is God-forsaken, him will the Kingdom of God receive' " (Celsus).

Yet this and no other is the Gospel, and no subtle syncretism, no insinuating compromise, must pervert it into a more acceptable approximation to the legalistic or naturalistic religions of mankind. Let such a compromise be effected and what then has the Church to proclaim that has not

already been said, perhaps more engagingly and in a hundred different forms? What shall justify her continued existence? She has looked back and become a pillar of salt that has lost its savour. She is at cross-purposes with the eternal Purpose of God.

CHRISTIAN LIVING: THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

V. 16-26

But I say, Walk by the Spirit—let your daily life and conduct be under the influence and rule of the Spirit of God—and then you will on no account wish to fulfil the flesh's lust. For indeed the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit strives against the flesh: and these two forces are opposed to one another in the region of your own experience: so that the things you should do are not simply whatever you may want to do at any given time! [Wyclif: "that ye don not alle thingis that ye witten"; Tyndale: "that ye cannot do that which ye wolde"; Rheims: "that not what things soever you will, these you doe"]. *But nevertheless if you are led by the Spirit you are under no law* (rather you are above the law!).

Now the works of the flesh are obvious. They are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness; idolatry, sorcery [lit. —pharmacy—the mixing of magic potions]; antagonisms (i.e. all uncharity), quarrels, jealous rivalries, outbursts of anger, partisan cliques, divisions ("splits"), sects ("splits" made permanent); envyings [murders]; carousals [Moffatt: "drinking bouts"], revels, and such like things; as to which I tell you in advance—I forewarn you—as also I have said before, That those who do such things shall not inherit God's Kingdom. But, on the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit of God is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness (benevolence), generosity (beneficence), good-faith, gentleness, self-control—and against such there is no law!

But those who are Christ's have already (and decisively—in the very act of faith through which they have identified

themselves with Him—) *crucified the flesh* (that is, their sinful unregenerate selves, their natural *egoism*) *with the feelings and lusts* that belong to it. *If we live to the Spirit*—if our new life is due to God's Spirit and must necessarily take its true direction from Him—then *by the Spirit we ought also to walk*, as to our daily life and conduct. *Do not then let us become vain and self-centred, provoking (challenging) one another, envying one another.*

“Here some make the charge that the Apostle has divided man into two parts, and that he states the essence of which he is compounded to be conflicting with itself, and that the body has a contest with the soul. But this is not so, most certainly; for by *the flesh* he does not mean the body; if he did, what would be the sense of the clause immediately following: *for it lusteth*, he says, *against the Spirit*? yet the body moves not, but is moved, is not an agent but is acted upon . . . for lust [desire] belongs to the soul, not to the body. . . . Wherefore then does Paul say, *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit*? He is wont to call the flesh, not the natural body, but the depraved will, as where he says *But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit*. . . . What then is his meaning? It is the earthly mind, slothful and careless, that he here calls the flesh, and this is not an accusation of the body, but the blame rests upon the soul that is slothful. The flesh is an instrument, and no one feels aversion and hatred to an instrument but to him who abuses it. . . . But it may be said that the very calling the faults of the soul by the name of the flesh is in itself an accusation of the body. And I admit that the flesh is inferior to the soul, yet it too is good. . . . In his expression [then] *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit* [Paul] . . . means two mental states which are opposed to each other . . . not the soul and the body. Were the two latter so opposed they would annihilate one another, as fire does water and darkness light. But if the soul cares for the body, and takes great forethought on its account, and suffers a thousand things in order not to leave it, and resists its separation from it; and if the body too ministers to the soul . . . and is adapted to its operations, how can they be contrary and conflicting with each

other? For my part I perceive by their acts that they are not contrary but closely accordant and attached one to another. It is not therefore of these that he speaks . . . but he refers to the contest of good and bad principles."—*Chrysostom*.

"The Schoolmen take the concupiscence of the flesh for carnal lust. Indeed it is true that even the godly . . . are tempted. . . . I do not deny therefore but that the concupiscence of the flesh comprehendeth carnal lust, but not that only. For concupiscence comprehendeth all other corrupt affections, wherewith the very faithful are infected, some more, some less: as pride, hatred, covetousness, impatency and such like. Yea, Paul rehearseth afterwards, among the works of the flesh, not only these gross vices, but also idolatry, heresies and such other. It is plain therefore that he speaketh . . . of the whole dominion of sin . . . as if he should say: 'I write unto you that you should love one another. This ye do not [i.e. perfectly], neither can ye do it, because of the flesh, which is infected and corrupted with concupiscence, and doth not only stir up sin in you, but also is sin itself. . . . Wherefore think me not to revoke and unsay that which I have taught concerning faith: for faith and hope must continue, that by the one we may be justified and by the other we may be raised up in adversities and endure to the end. . . .

"Therefore when a man feeleth this battle of the flesh let him not be discouraged therewith, but let him resist in Spirit and say, "I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me: for I have not yet put off the flesh. . . . But I will obey the Spirit and not the flesh; that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold upon Christ, and by His Word I will raise up myself; and, being so raised up, I will not fulfil the lust of the flesh."'"—*Luther*.

I, Paul, have said that you must be on your guard against fleshly indulgence. For the life of fleshly indulgence, which comprehends all that belongs to your *egoism* as men who are by nature sinners—that life and that course of conduct point in the wrong direction and bear *false* witness to the faith which you now profess. For as to your natural selves you are "flesh"—you are "human" according to the corrupted

humanity of the first and fallen Adam. Your "ego" is the ego of concupiscence; your "psychology" is the psychology of sin; your "animus" is the animus of "flesh," the spirit of fallen man and not the Spirit of God. But now, through the Gospel, a new contact has been established between what you are and what you are not, between the "I" and the "Not I," between the comprehensible-actual and that incomprehensible-eternal which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which hath not entered the heart of man (1 Cor. ii. 9). Yes, a new contact has been established between the egoism which is our natural life-principle and makes for sin, and the Spirit which is not ourselves and makes for the righteousness of God. And this contact is a disturbance, a conflict, a contradiction (Rom. vii. 14-17).

For when faith came to you through your hearing the Gospel message, God sent forth His own Spirit into your hearts, encouraging you to confide in God as your Father, and to do so not on the strength of your own virtue or inherent quality but by reason of the nature and grace and promise of God Himself. And that remains the amazing, incredible truth. Infirm, corrupt and sinful as we are in ourselves, we are nevertheless sons of God; and henceforth that is the *direction* toward which we live. But as far as our natural existence is concerned we are not sensible of it at all. On the contrary we are sensible of our own urgent appetites and impulses, our physical desires and intellectual curiosities, our craving for power, for exaltation, for security and happiness. It is true that even on this basis men may account themselves, or their projection of themselves, as "divine," thus worshipping as God that which by nature is not God: but this, at any rate, after our enlightenment, we ourselves cannot do; nevertheless, as to our present natural life we are still rooted in concupiscence. So we are at issue; *the flesh lusts against God's Spirit and the Spirit strives against the flesh*. Our life, whatever it was before our

conversion, is no longer a simple course dictated by our own desires.

Before you became Christian you knew little or nothing of all this. You were under some measure of discipline, it is true, as we all were. You were "under law"; under the law of your religion, your country, your community, and of your own heart and conscience; and often you chafed under it: but the conflict was not the same as now. (For one thing, the Law was on the same plane as your own natural life—on the plane of "the flesh": it was a thing of outward rules and observances.) But from the moment you heard the Gospel and believed the promises of God in Christ, from that moment you were at issue within yourselves. There were two incompatible and warring principles in your life: "the flesh," holding you down to the old level of your natural experience, and the Spirit, drawing you upward beyond experience to the level of faith, even the faith that dares to cry "*Abba! Father!*" and confide as a son in God, and live to Him. So that henceforth *the things you should do* were *not* simply *the things you might want to do*. Is this, then, being put "under Law" again? No! for *if you are led by God's Spirit you are under no law*: you are above the Law!

Now the works of the flesh are obvious. There may be diversity of manifestation, but the principle is the same throughout. Thus it may take the form of sensuality and intemperance—*adultery, carousals*; or it may operate in the realm of religion and magic—*idolatry, sorcery*; again, in the realm of the social relationships it may take the form of malign humours, *quarrels, factions, violent partisanries, feuds*: but always it is the expression of man's concupiscence and false autonomy. It is man exalting his creatureliness against God; it is man, as an individual or a sect or class or race, setting up his own sovereignty and seeking the ultimate satisfaction in himself, in his own pleasure, his own power,

his own interests, his own "righteousness." This is the principle that actuates mankind as "flesh," and these are the works of the flesh—dead works (Heb. ix. 14), bearing in themselves the seed of disintegration and corruption. Yes; I solemnly warn you again, as I have done before, *that those who practise such things shall not inherit God's Kingdom.*

And then *the fruit of the Divine Spirit* is equally obvious. It is *Love*; the love of which concupiscence is the satanic counterfeit and travesty; the love which is conceived in reverence for the Good, and which issues in devotion to the good of all. Thus, too, it is *joy*, which is the song, the music, of love in all its harmonious relationships; and *peace*, which is the rhythm of that harmony. And how does this love show itself in its social behaviour? As *forbearance* (good temper under provocation); as *kindliness* (good-will), as *generosity* (good works), as *fidelity* (*good-faith*)—as that *gentleness* which is the grace of strength in its outward activity, and temperance (*self-control*) which is that grace in its inward poise and discipline.

Is there, then, no middle way between these two irreconcilable opposites? Is Adam's world, the actual world of unregenerate man, wholly given over to "the flesh," to sensuality, enmity, avarice, murder? Nay verily, for then how should the world stand? There is the middle way of the Law! The mystery of iniquity, the secret destructive force of "the flesh," is restrained (2 Thess. ii. 3-7). Even the power of human governments is an ordinance of God for the suppression, not indeed of evil, but of evil works (Rom. xiii. 1-4). Moreover "the flesh," the active principle of egoism and of evil, is not the whole of man! Who but God can judge "the secrets of men" (Rom. ii. 16) and lay bare all the complexities and contradictions of man's nature? Adam, though he has forfeited paradise, is not wholly God-forsaken nor a stranger to the strivings of the Spirit. The word of the Divine Law is written in his heart, and his

conscience bears witness to it (Rom. ii. 14-16). Yea, is Grace itself a respecter of persons? May there not be, even among those that are unlearned and unbelievers, heart-secrets that are of God (1 Cor. xiv. 23-5), and even a patient continuance in well-doing (Rom. ii. 7)? If there is Original Sin is there not also an Original Good? and if there is a common guilt is there not also a common and preparatory grace?

But those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts that belong to it. ("The comfortable and easy manner in which men advance towards this critical point is the primary curse which lies upon all, or almost all, dogmatic preaching"—Barth.) If you are Christ's you are crucified men! Your faith was and is a crucifixion—and a resurrection. You have been crucified to "the flesh," to all your former egoism, and the flesh to you. For you there is no "middle way," no bridle-path of law, no moving *between* two possible alternatives of "flesh" and "Spirit." You have crucified the flesh, the old life; you have done with the false autonomy of concupiscence and all its works. You are no longer yourselves—because by faith you have come to yourselves! You are what you are not! You are *righteous*! You are *sons of God*! That is the meaning of your faith, or it has no meaning.

But mark—this meaning exists for faith alone—even for the faith which reckons upon Him Who gives life to the dead and calls them that are not as though they were. To hold by this apart from faith, apart, that is, from a confiding reliance upon the pledges of God in Christ Jesus; to hold by it on the basis of our own religious consciousness, or our own philosophic speculation—this would indeed be the wildest fantasy or the most impious presumption. But you have believed in Christ; you have been immersed into Christ (iii. 27), into His death and resurrection: therefore you have the standing of men who, in that act of faith, have

already crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. You have done with the life of concupiscence and live the eternal life of sons of God led by the Spirit of God.

Yes, this is the new life. But, I declare again, it exists only for faith! To the world it is incomprehensible; and to *you* it is incomprehensible—except by faith. In your present known and experienced situation you groan, being burdened (2 Cor. v. 4); you live on the dark and mortal side of the resurrection; you are in the flesh and compassed with infirmity: you are sinful men. But now I beseech you, as you have believed in the Son of God unto eternal life, plant this standard of faith here in the midst of the days and of your present earthly situation! If we live to the Spirit as to the eternal direction of our faith, then let us order our steps day by day, in this present life, accordingly: in *the Spirit* let us *walk also*. No more *vanity*, then! No more *provoking* of one another to anger and faction! No more *envying* of one another! Behaviour of that kind points in the wrong direction. It witnesses to the activity of the natural man and his egoism; and the world needs no such witness; it has witnesses enough. Let your daily conduct point in the direction of the Spirit of God, Whose life finds fruitage not in rancour and lust but in the love whose core is goodness and in the goodness whose essence is love.

Nevertheless this “walking by the Spirit,” here in this present life, will at all times be imperfect. (Is not all “walking” made up of a series of “falls” and recoveries?) It is true not only that the things we ought to do are never merely the things we may happen to want to do (ver. 17), but also we are hindered in doing the things we ought to do. The good we would we do not; the evil we would not we practise (Rom. vii. 18–20). Men of the Spirit are also men of the flesh; believers are also unbelievers; saints are sinners: even to the elect the Kingdom of God is a foreign country (Luther). Wherefore, brothers, consider what should be

your attitude if one of you were discovered in flagrant wrong-doing! Your attitude should be influenced by this consideration—That you yourselves also, even you who are “spiritual,” may be likewise tempted.

RULES AND REASONS

VI. I-10

Brothers, even if a man is caught in some offence [Wyclif: “occupied in any guilt”: Cranmer: “taken in any fault”], you who are spiritual should (not only) set him right but also should be careful to do so in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself each one of you, lest you also should be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so carry out (all of you together) the law of Christ (of Christ Himself, and not simply the law of Mosaic rites and ceremonies). For if any one fancies himself to be somebody (being by that token nobody!) he deceives himself—he suffers from delusions. But let every one test his own work, and then his ground for boasting will be in himself, and not in his comparing himself with others. [Moffatt: “he will have something to boast about on his own account, and not” etc.] For in this respect each one must carry his own load—his own pack! [Wyclif: “each man shall bear his own charge.”]

Let him who is being instructed in the Word share all the good things of this life with his teacher.

[And now to sum up:] *Make no mistake—God is not mocked (don’t be deceived into imagining that God can be cheated or put off with any outward show of religion, or by rites and ceremonies). No: for whatever a man actually sows, depend upon it, that is what he will also reap. For he who sows for his flesh—for his own worldly interests, his own greed, or his own spiritual pride—from that same sowing of the flesh he will reap a harvest of corruption: but he who sows for the Spirit—from that sowing of the Spirit he will reap a harvest of eternal life. Let us not be faint-hearted in well-doing, then (“let us not*

tire of doing right"): *for in the proper season, if we don't lose heart, we shall reap the harvest. So then, as we have seasonable opportunity (in this present sowing-time) let us do good to all, particularly to those who belong to the household of the Faith.*

You see, brothers, I am concerned that you should be on your guard against loose conduct, worldliness and immorality: and I know that those of you who are spiritually minded share my concern. You feel the need for a more rigorous discipline, for dealing with certain dangerous tendencies within the household of the Faith. But remember that "discipline" is not enough: punishing "offences" is not enough: you must aim at restoring the offender. Otherwise your own "spirituality" is not really spiritual at all; it is simply pride and censoriousness masquerading as piety. So then, *brothers, even if a man is found out, beyond question, in some offence, you who are spiritual* must not constitute yourselves simply his judges and disciplinarians. You are the comrades who must rescue a fellow-soldier fallen in the fight—the physicians who must seek to heal the wound or re-set the fracture and restore the sufferer to health. For this there is need not only for zeal but also for tenderness and delicacy of touch! *Restore* such a one, then, *in a spirit of gentleness*. For you—for us all, in such cases—this gentleness means humility, the consciousness that but for the grace of God we ourselves should be in the offender's place. Yes, let each one of you look to himself *lest he also be tempted!* Of course you may be strong! Well, if so, all the more reason that you should bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1)—(the burdens which they make for themselves and us—Moffatt)! and not simply pride yourself in your strength by comparing yourself with others. *Bear one another's burdens!* that is the rule; if you keep it you will, all of you together, *carry out the law of Christ Jesus Himself*; the true Law, of which the ceremonial laws of Moses were

but the types and shadows. But if any one imagines himself to be so strong, so "spiritual," by comparison with others, that he must hold himself superior to the "weaker brothers" and load them with his censures and strictures—well, he doesn't know himself! he is a victim to his own delusions! *For you may take it as the rule that if any one fancies himself to be "somebody," and that he has the right to boast over others, that itself is sufficient token that he is nobody and deceives himself!*

So let us have done with vainglory and all fancied and flattering comparisons of ourselves with others. It is enough that we bear our own load of responsibility before God. *Let every one examine himself, test his own work, make sober estimate of his own gifts and responsibilities, as God has dealt them out to each one of us individually: then his cause for rejoicing—for boasting—if he has any!—will be genuine; it will not lie in his false self-comparisons at the expense of others. For in this matter each one of us must take the field carrying his own pack, his own equipment and impedimenta. We must bear one another's burdens, but our individual responsibility for doing so, and all our other responsibilities arising out of our own gifts and opportunities; these are a load which each one of us must carry for himself. (And, since I have spoken of burden-sharing, I must remind you of your obligation to support the ministry of the Gospel. Let him who is being instructed in the Word share the good things of life, as God has prospered him, with his teacher. Let that be your rule.)*

And now, brothers, to sum up. I have tried to set before you the tremendous alternatives—Law or Grace, bondage or liberty, the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit. Don't, I beseech you, be *deceived* nor deceive yourselves. Don't imagine that an outward profession of faith, an outward show of religion, is enough. *God is not deceived, God is not mocked!* The tree is known by its fruit, the grain is

proved by the crop: and though now, with us, it is sowing-time and not harvest-time, yet God can see the end from the beginning; He can see the effect in the cause, the fruit in the sap, the crop in the seed. Yes, His law covers seed-time and harvest and cannot be set aside or circumvented. And you know what it is; it is this: *Whatever a man may sow, that shall he also reap*. If you sow for the flesh, if you live from the ego-motive, however subtly disguised, if your very religion is an attempt at self-justification and self-exaltation, or if, while claiming Gospel liberty, your real concern is to live a life of self-indulgence, then be sure it is the harvest of *the flesh* that you *will reap*, and it will be a harvest of *corruption*. On the other hand, if you sow for the Spirit of God, if you sow the faith that works by love, then just as surely you *will reap* the harvest of *eternal life*.

Come then! Don't let us be *faint-hearted in well-doing: for in due season*, when harvest-time comes (and if we never lose heart and give up!) *we shall reap* the good we have sown. So then, since the season now is sowing-time, *let us* use every opportunity to *do good to all, particularly*—for that is our first responsibility—to those who belong to the household of the Faith.

RECAPITULATION

VI. 11-18

Look what big letters I make when I write to you with my own hand!

It is simply those who want to appear to advantage in this present world [lit. "in the flesh"; i.e. it is those "Jewish-Christians," who want to keep up an appearance of national Orthodoxy and so escape persecution], who would compel you to be circumcised. For not even these Circumcisionists themselves really keep the Law! No; but they want you to be circumcised in order that they may show you off and

boast in your (branded) flesh (as trophies won for Jewry!). But for me, no boasting at all—except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! the cross through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world! For what really matters is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (cf. Cor. v. 17 etc). And as many as follow this rule, peace and mercy be upon them—upon the (true) Israel of God. From now on let no one interfere with me, for I bear in my body the brands of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

I must add this last word *with my own hand*. Do not, I beg of you, be misled by all this insistence upon circumcision and the importance of the Jewish ceremonial law. Take it from me that, whether they know their own hearts or not, these Circumcisionists who are unsettling you are not doing so out of sincere devotion to the Law about which they talk so loudly: no, for they *themselves* do not *keep this Law!* With them it is simply a matter of religious policy. They claim to be Jewish-Christians, but they are anxious for all that *to appear to advantage in this present world*—to cut a good figure before men. They would like to stand well with the orthodox Synagogue and the National Party in their own country, and so avoid persecution; and they hope that by advocating Circumcision they can conciliate the Jewish authorities. That is, they believe that if they concede that a man cannot be a true Christian unless he becomes an honorary Jew—if they recognize the Jewish racial principle and the Jewish Law as a part of the Gospel—then the national Jewish opposition will cease. That is really why *they want you to be circumcised*. They want to be able to *boast* of you as Jewish proselytes whom they have won over. They want to brand your bodies so that you will bear the sign and seal of the Israel that is after the flesh. In that way they hope the National authorities will be satisfied and the offence of Christ will cease.

But the offence of Christ, the Cross of Christ, is our glory, and when that goes everything goes. For my part may I never *boast* in anything else, but only *in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Through that Cross *the world* has been crucified to me once and for all. I have seen into the heart of things. I have seen what true glory means. I have seen Jesus Christ humbling Himself for love's sake, and making Himself of no reputation, and taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and suffering shame and ignominy and death. And the world with its vulgar pride, its lust for power, its greed, its cruelty, its tyranny, its pretence—I have seen the world sending Him to His death and reddening its hands in His blood. I have seen the world do that in the name of religion, in the name of high policy, in the name of the State, in the name of the Empire. And I have seen the world exposed by its own indictment, condemned by its own verdict, executed on its own gibbet. Yes: for to me the world, I say, is crucified: it is a malefactor tried and sentenced; it is a spectacle of death. With what promises then should it seduce me, with what honours bribe me? How should its pretensions deceive me any more?

I, too, am crucified to the world. I, too, am dead! For I, too, am the world! and through the Cross of Christ the world that is myself has been crucified. All my own pride, my own vainglory, my own lust for power and pre-eminence—all this has been brought to judgment and sentenced. To the world itself I am a crucified thing, and there is nothing in me that it should desire me. The Cross has wrought for me this double death, so that the world and I are crucified to each other.

Truly I write this to you who are spiritual and understand the distinction between Flesh and Spirit! Truly I am claiming for myself no moral heroism nor mystical attainment. To the mind of my flesh the world is *not* crucified nor am I crucified. To the mind of my flesh the world and I are

still full of the lust of life—which is death! But that mind is no longer myself! I am no longer I! Through the Cross I have the mind of Christ, the mind of the Spirit: through the Cross I apprehend myself as other than the man of the flesh, even as the man of the Spirit, the man who lives in God. For through the Cross—and how else?—I have come to apprehend, yea rather to be apprehended by, the love of Christ, the grace of God. No glorying, then, for me except in the glorious offence and reproach and scandal of Christ crucified! No glorying except in the Cross—which is now the Cross not only of His Own sufferings but of ours, too, for His sake! This is the incredible secret which has been made known to us—joy in sorrow, glory in shame, life in death, creation in dissolution! What then is *circumcision*? What is *uncircumcision*? Nothing! *The new creation* is everything. *As many as are guided by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them—that is, upon the true Israel of God.*

From henceforth *let no one* trouble me or think he can take me to task as if I were answerable to him or to any human authority. I am no man's servant, even though I am servant to all men. I am branded, it is true, with stripes and scars! and I *bear* them gladly; for they show Whose I am and Whom I serve. They are *the brands of Jesus*.

AFTERWORD

We have, it may be, covered some ground together since we noted at the outset (p. 5) the distinguished scholar's observations upon this Epistle. And to us, standing now at the end of our journey and looking back, those scholarly "simplifications" to which the Epistle was apparently reduced (in the process of the search for the essential Christian Faith) may seem rather less than satisfying. For does it now appear altogether satisfying to regard *Galatians* as witnessing in the main to a "popular movement" whose dynamic spirit can be expressed as a determination to think well of everybody and act well toward everybody, to accept life with a cheerful piety, and to keep out of quarrels and wars? Does this impress us as an adequate treatment of such historical evidence as the Epistle supplies and, in its entirety, embodies? Can it be said, by way of indicating one of the luminous and significant features of the Epistle, that it intentionally witnesses, with any degree of emphasis, to any "popular movement" at all, save as the subversive movement which it is concerned to denounce may be called "popular"? Is it a mere verbal quibble unworthy of serious notice to say that it witnesses rather to a movement which, as to its alleged origin and nature, was quite other than popular, "neither of men nor by man," even the Gospel of God? The Church itself, as a movement, was founded, judged and sustained by this Gospel of God, and not the Gospel by the Church. It was the Gospel indeed which judged all things, breaking in upon a world agitated by every sort of movement, religious, racial and social. And this Gospel of God was the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Himself no shadowy figure, however mysterious, but bringing into a world of shadows the saving reality of His grace. Because

it is not presented in biographical detail a figure is not of necessity "shadowy," any more than the sea in Conrad's stories is shadowy because it is not presented as a measured and charted volume of water, but rather as an unfathomed deep in which ships sail and islands are oceaned. It is always possible, admittedly, to introduce analytical discriminations, to speak of the "Pauline Christology" or soteriology or the like, and to treat these as an effete religious tradition; but what becomes of the historical Faith if redemption in Christ, justification by faith, and the Resurrection are left out?

There is a passage in the writings of Kierkegaard in which he appeals to his contemporaries not to speak of great things in a little way. Even though a man be born in poor circumstances (he argues), that is no reason why he should be so inhuman to himself as to make himself incapable of even imagining the king's castle, and thus, as might be said, putting himself under the necessity of simplifying it into something less than itself. The fact, says Kierkegaard, that we may not be able to claim relationship with kings ought not to prevent our recognizing the castle and even, should the way open to us, entering it, not indeed impudently, but yet as something more than charwomen or vandal tourists. "I demand of every man that he should not think so inhumanly of himself as to prevent himself from entering those palaces, which are inhabited, not only by the memory of the chosen ones, but by the chosen ones themselves."¹

Nevertheless it is here that we are being pressed; nor may we look to Christian scholarship as such to relieve the pressure. No simplification of the early Christian Faith into the ethics of benevolence, cheerfulness and pacifism will easily satisfy a conscience concerned to deal fairly with historical evidence; but also it is true that, so far as historical evidence is concerned, the Faith forces us back upon levelled

¹ "Fear and Trembling," tr. Robt. Payne, 1939, p. 91.

points of interrogation. Thus, as we have said, the Resurrection as a past unique event must remain—questionable. And manifestly it is not scholarship or philosophy that can relieve the pressure here. Faith in the historical Gospel can never be the easy recognition of the obvious, nor yet the subjugation of a problem intricate and difficult but amenable to detective investigation. Perhaps, therefore, we are brought to the point which St. Paul would have us reach, or upon which he would finally force us, namely, to the recognition that such faith is possible only when we are shut up to it; only when we do really recognize that our gospels of religious institutionalism, meliorism, scientific progress, or the newest messianism of race, or the apocalypticism which publishes a millennium by the operation of an infallible economic formula, leave us still in bondage to corruption.

The Reformers, it has been said, were not primarily Biblicists, but gossellers. They could be critical enough in their treatment of the canon of Holy Scripture. The Bible was for them the book of the Gospel, and their deepest veneration and zeal for the Book grew out of their zeal for the Gospel itself. But also they understood that the Gospel could be relevant and credible only as men were initiated into the *dimension* in which it moves, which is the dimension of eternal holiness and grace. And for this the Reformers held—with St. Paul—that “Law-work” was necessary. For indeed the Law has always been credible enough. The command, *Thou shalt not covet*, is not questionable; instead it is its way to make *us* questionable at the bar of our own conscience. And it is as we find ourselves questionable men, engaged in a struggle unto death with the evil within us, that we learn of sin and guilt, of holiness and grace, and thus the Gospel speaks to our condition.

What then of the world? By the world the Gospel itself can at best be understood only as Law—until the day of visitation. For what should a world usually convinced of

its own sufficiency and conscious of its own vitality have to do with a Gospel of justification and resurrection? But the world has an ear for Law. Is it not a mis-statement to say that the Church is "the conscience of society"? The world has its own conscience. It can discern between justice and injustice, freedom and oppression, the spirit that exploits a private advantage, and the spirit that seeks a public good. Hume, in his "Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals," remarks that the epithets sociable, humane, merciful, friendly, generous, have their equivalents in all languages and always denote what is esteemed as meritorious; and Pindar anticipates Paul by describing Law, "King of all mortals and immortals," as an inward rule—not simply a code inscribed on papyrus rolls or engraved on tablets, but a rule royally established within the soul. The world then is law-conscious, and in respect to this it has, this long while, reached its own recognition of Jesus Christ—as lawgiver or teacher. It has so recognized Him, not indeed to submit to Him, but as knowing Him *there*. So Governments and States may still salute the "Christian ideal," and (even if official speech is not versed in the language of confession and contrition) may still identify their policy with "the aims of Christianity." For is it not "the aim of Christianity" that a true community should be achieved among nations and that all peoples and classes should live together in good neighbourhood, prosperity, and peace?

This is the Gospel as the world is prepared to see it—the Gospel as Law, as "idealism," as a practicable-impracticable rule of right and of well-being: and for this cause, for this cause also, the Church, as teacher and exemplar of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, has need to have her "manner of life right among the nations" (1 Pet. ii. 12), that they, through her good works, "may glorify God in the day of visitation": that is, when the Gospel as Law shall have at last shut the nations up to the Gospel as Grace. For in

that day shall it not be seen that every system, every "ideal" whatsoever, leads to disillusion, and *that* not because of a flaw in the formula, but because of the flaw, the warp, the evil, in man himself, and thus in the human situation as a whole?

And here it is not without point that we have noted St. Paul's fight for the Church as transcending in its fellowship all limits of race or class—his fight for this not as a bold and adventurous policy preferable to another less adventurous and less bold, but as the only possible rule for the Church if it is to remain the Church *of Christ*. And that the Church is "of Christ," "of God," of Him only, and not "of" Christ and "of" some other relative or competitive loyalty, is made clear. For in this close and final sense, this strict evaluation of grammatical prepositions, there is no Church *of* Judæa, or *of* Galatia, or *of* Rome (nor yet *of* England, *of* Scotland, *of* America)—or *of* any country or territory, but only the Church that is *of* Christ and therefore *for* all peoples. So that "the churches of Judæa which were in Christ" (Gal. i. 22) become in the more explicit phrasing of 1 Thess. ii. 14, "the churches *of* God which *in* Judæa are *in* Christ Jesus." And "in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision" (Gal. v. 6): for in the new creation there "cannot be" (Col. iii. 11, R.V.) Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: there "cannot be" distinction of race or colour, grade or caste. The Church knows of no master race or subject races; the Church knows no colour bar or class distinction; these things "cannot be." This then goes without saying, which means that from time to time it is well emphatically to say it. As for the world, it certainly does know these divisions. The world is race-conscious and class-conscious. And the Church cannot impose its own order upon the world, it can only maintain that order and exhibit it. For the Church's order grows out of its Faith, which is a Faith, not to be

imposed, but to be confessed. But by this confession and this enacted witness the Church sets its question-mark against the traditions of men and the ways of the world. It represents to a law-conscious world a disturbing Law which cannot be dismissed.

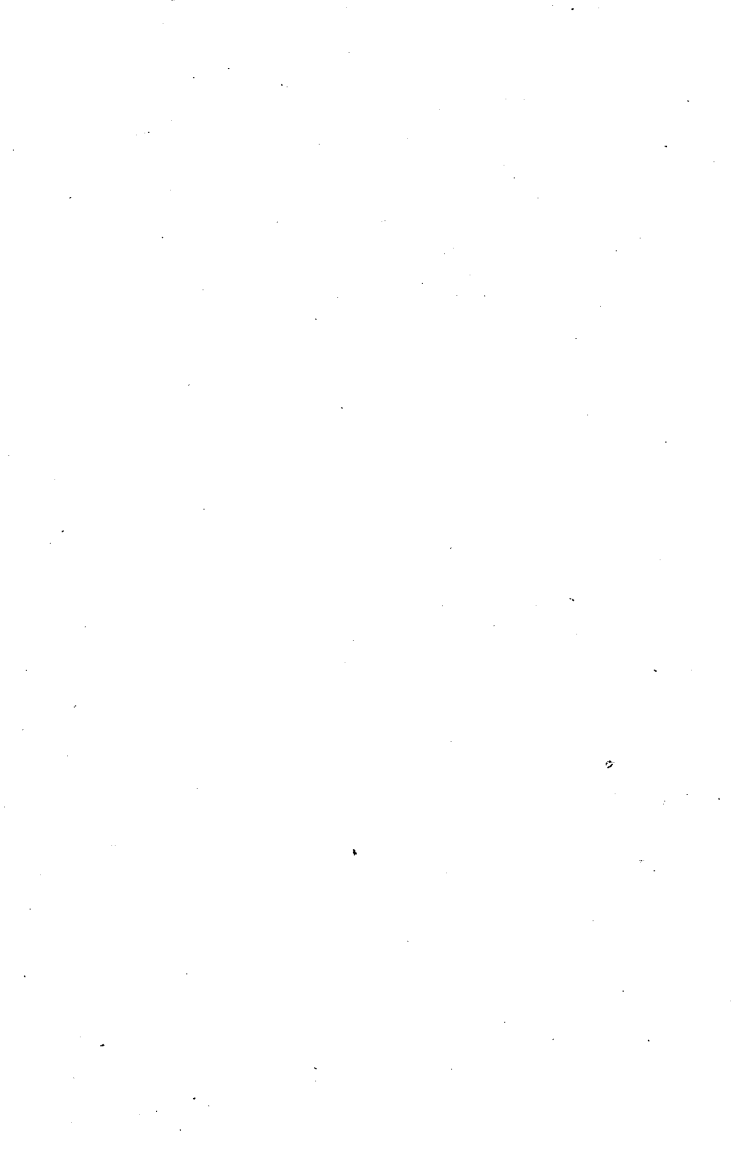
Finally, the Church lives by the Gospel, by that which is not "of men nor by man," but of God. The same service must not be expected from the Church that is expected from a W.E.A. lectureship or a Citizens' Society, or a Welfare Guild. The Church is not, for example, centrally and distinctively an educational institution for the cultivation of good citizenship within the State. It is certainly concerned with citizenship, social justice, and world-community, for the earth is the Lord's and under His ordering; nevertheless the Church is not an "uplift" society working for purely temporal ends; though under its shadow such societies may flourish as they certainly would not if the Church were removed. But the Church lives by the Gospel of God, which is the Gospel of forgiveness and resurrection unto life eternal in Christ. Otherwise, in these days of compulsory education and compulsory service generally, why should not the churches presently lend themselves (as has been somewhere humorously suggested) to these necessary compulsions, and amass regular congregations by a sort of State conscription of "worshippers"—with the understanding, of course, that such educational services, sermons, and propagandist arrangements should be under proper censorship and control? Perhaps there is no reason why even this should not be entertained if the Church lives not by the Gospel, but by an educational religious tradition. But the Church lives by the Gospel of God; and we know, if only from our study of this Epistle, that the Gospel is not "manageable." It must be proclaimed in its sovereignty and not pressed into the requirements of extraneous services or altered in the interests of some urgent utility.

And this is crucial. For if the Church claims to have a Faith commensurate with the need of the world, this claim cannot rest upon the Church's organization, or piety, or civic service, or its various theologies. The sovereign Word of God to which the Church is bound to testify to the world is the Word made flesh—in Christ Himself as Mediator for the world, the Alpha and the Omega, the Reconciler of all things. Only so has the Church the Word to which the heavens and the earth must give heed: only so can the Church speak of World Faith. And if now, at the end, we also must surrender to the cult of the Paradox, let it be said that, after all, it may be that in the unmanageable incredibility of the Gospel its credibility finally comes home to us. For it is the incredible grace and miracle of the Word made flesh, of Forgiveness, Justification, and Resurrection unto life eternal, that speak to the eternal, incredible needs of man. A little Christ, we should have learned by now, is not more credible; it is simply that he becomes negligible.

But if all this evokes "cordial agreement" as being something generally "sound" and commendable, let it be confessed that it was not in any corresponding mood of gratification that this little study was written: not in "liberty" but in embarrassment and searching of heart. Perhaps with its repetitive "*Question*" this little book will do no more than hold the reader—if it does hold him—at the point of interrogation. "What shall we say, then, to these things?"

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